THE *NATURAL FORCE* DOMAIN IN PORTUGUESE PHRASEOLOGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present study resulted from the findings of two our previous studies (Lanović 2012, 2018) dedicated to the concept of the SEA as represented generally in Portuguese phraseology and to the conceptualization of the SEA as the NATURAL FORCE in Portuguese phraseology, respectively. An extensive and quantitatively representative corpus gathering the Portuguese phraseological units – idioms and proverbs with figurative meaning related to the concept of the SEA – was submitted to a semantic-conceptual analysis, with two main aims. The primary aim was to establish the motivation of the idiomatic meaning of the expressions in relation to the literal one. Secondly, we tried to verify if there were any systematic relations between the meanings of the expressions related to the same domain, aiming to examine the principles these are (eventually) based on.

The findings of that investigation support the hypothesis that meanings of a great majority of idiomatic expressions in general are conceptually founded. That means they can be ascribed to some conceptual mechanisms of mainly metaphorical or metonymic nature which relate, in a relatively regular way, some more concrete or directly conceivable *source* concepts or domains (SD) explicit in the literal meaning, to some more abstract *target* concepts or domains (TD), manifested in the idiomatic meaning. Those conceptual mechanisms act in combination with other, "pre-conceptual" factors – for example, cultural symbols or addressing another symbolic code etc.

Since in the case of this very study the mechanisms are exclusively conceptual, we rely, for the analysis methodology, mostly on the *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). We focus upon a conceptual structure called, for this purpose, *the NATURAL FORCE domain*.

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The findings of the analysis highlighted the (potential) correlation of this conceptualization principle with the notion of *causation* and the semantic category of *causality*, so in the second part of the paper we reflect upon such a hypothesis, especially in terms of Talmy's innovative contribution to the subject – the *Force Dynamics* model (Talmy 1988, 2000).

1.1. The *corpus* of the phraseological units analyzed for the purpose of this study represents, in fact, a "collection of texts". Given the low frequency of phraseological units in any type of limited corpora, we combined various sources: from an electronic corpus of spoken and written Portuguese to some collectaneas of folk-wisdom. Some restrictions in construction of the "database", primarily established, refer to the obligatory *idomatic (figurative) meaning* and the *conventionality*[1]. There were no limitations in the matter of form, nor in terms of eventual diatopic, diastratic or diachronic markedness of the units. So the "database" may be heterogeneous considering the origin and the active (or actual) usage of the expressions, but for the purpose of this study it was irrelevant because they nevertheless reflect a certain principles of conceptualization of the NATURAL FORCE domain. Moreover, that principles happen to be, in many aspects, universal or at least exceed, in cultural terms, the limits of the Portuguese speech community. Our assumptions considering the motivation were based on the lexical constituents criteria; we extracted phraseological units containing one of the pre-selected components from the "semantic sphere" (Berruto 1988: 73) of natural forces: *mar*, *maré*, *onda*, *corrente*, *rio*, *água*, *chuva*, *ar*, *vento*, *tempestade*, *tormenta*, *borrasca*.

2. THE *NATURAL FORCE* DOMAIN IN PORTUGUESE PHRASEOLOGY

The conceptualization of natural forces in phraseology has been considered and discussed by followers of the anthropological stream. They have pointed out that the natural phenomena on conceptual level are often metaphorically associated with events that affect our life, but in principle we have no influence on them (Teliya, Bragina, Oparina & Sandomirskaya 1998: 71–72)[2].

The basic generic principle of a metaphoric model or a conceptual structure named, for this purpose, *the NATURAL FORCE domain* assumes that *external circumstances or events causing or influencing the action* are conceptualized, at SD level, as *natural forces causing or influencing the motion*.

[1] Here in the sense that the "database" does not include idiosyncratic (*one-shot*) expressions, but exclusively those verified in the lexicographic sources.

[2] Silaški & Đurović (2011), for example, argue that two main purposes for use of the NATURAL FORCE metaphor are *unpredictability* and *masking the agency*. Many cognitive semanticists have observed and argued for the functionality of the generic conceptual metaphor EMOTIONS are NATURAL FORCES. Kövecses (2000: 63) interprets the relation between the person and one's own emotions as the relation *agonist/antagonist*, that is by Talmy's Force Dynamics construct.

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This model is consistent, in many elements, with a complex generic-level spatial metaphor with universal character postulated by Lakoff (1993) as *Event Structure Metaphor*. The basic principle underlying this metaphor is that different aspects of internal structure of *events* (including states, changes, attributes, causes, means, purposes etc.) are conceptualized in terms of motion in space and object manipulation – that is, in terms of certain physical entities: *space* (locations), *motion* and *forces*.

There's a particular aspect of this model we would like to stress – within the Event Structure Metaphor, every *purposeful action* is conceived as *self-propelled motion*. On the other hand, in the NATURAL FORCE domain the subject's motion, *mostly*, is not self-propelled; "the subject"[3] is in principle conceptualized *statically* in relation to the natural force, which is *dynamic*. On target level, it would mean that the subject's action is controlled by external events more than by subject itself. Accordingly, on source level the natural force is definitely the agent, the driving force, but – as we will see – it doesn't mean it can't be beneficial or advantageous in relation to the subject's action.

We will adduce some specific-level mappings, exemplifying them by few representative units from the "database"[4].

2.1.

HELP IN ACTING IS HELP IN MOVING
EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ACTION are WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING MOTION
EXPOSE ONESELF TO EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES is EXPOSE ONESELF TO WEATHER CONDITIONS / NATURAL FORCES
EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES FAVORING ACTION are NATURAL FORCES FAVORING MOTION / FAVORABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS (CALM SEA, FAVORABLE WIND)
EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES DETRIMENTAL / UNFAVORABLE TO LIFE AND ACTION are UNFAVORABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS (ROUGH SEA, RAIN, STORM)

(1) *Quem se sujeita ao mar, sujeita-se à tormenta.*
Quem anda à chuva, molha-se.

(2) *andar / estar / navegar em maré alta / maré de rosas*
(estar) na crista da onda
Quando o mar está de feição é que é molhar a vela.
Quando o mar está calmo, qualquer um pode ir ao leme.
Deus (a)diante, o mar é chão.

[3] In this work, we will use the term *subject* to designate a conceptually prominent element of the idiomatic expression itself, the "semantic focus" within the idiomatic context (the lexical subjects are frequently absent in idiomatic constructions). In Cognitive Linguistics terminology (although it refers primarily to grammatical construction semantics in Langacker and Talmy), it could be designated as the *figure*, prominent in relation to the *ground* (although there have been more terms used). In Talmy's *Force Dynamics* context, our subject would correspond to the *Agonist*, the entity that is singled out for focal attention.

[4] All the units are verified in lexicographic or phraseological sources, most part in more of them. For the "economy" reasons, instead of quoting the definitions, we will comment on their idiomatic meanings when less transparent or when considered necessary.

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(3) *águas turvas*
toldarem-se / turvarem-se os ares
Temos chuva!
fazer / levantar ondas
Quem semeia ventos, colhe tempestades.
Poucos passam o mar sem contar da tormenta.
Conhece-se o marinheiro quando vem a tempestade.
Grande mar, grande tormenta.
estar em maré baixa / vazante / minguante / decrescente

(4) *Depois da tempestade vem a bonança.*
À bonança segue a tormenta.
Água dá, água leva.

The conceptualization of expressions in (2) is mostly based on the static dimension of the sea (the image of sea surface without any movement). On the other hand, the subject is moving; the metaphoric motivation of many expressions from the "database" implies the interaction with the SEA JOURNEY metaphor (Lanović & Varga 2015) – two models are coherent, both consistent with principles of the Lakoff's *Event Structure Metaphor*, but they rely on different aspects of the SEA concept. The concept of TIDE in (2) and (3) acts in interaction with another relevant basis of the conceptualization of *high and low tide* – the orientational or spatial metaphor structured as UP-DOWN image-schema ("THE POSITIVE" is HIGH TIDE / "THE NEGATIVE" is LOW TIDE). The motivation of conventional expressions in (4), shared by many languages, is based on the *contrast* between favorable and unfavorable weather conditions which in TD map on life and action circumstances.

2.1.1.

ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES IS MOVING
IN THE DIRECTION OF NATURAL FORCE MOTION
TAKING ADVANTAGE OF FAVORABLE EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES IS MOVING
WITH THE HELP OF NATURAL FORCE
(ALLOW TO BE CARRIED IN THE DESIRED DIRECTION)

(5) *aproveitar a maré*
ter vento à mare
errar a maré
Uma onda se vai e outra vem.
Quando há vento é que se iça a vela.
(ir / navegar) de vento em popa
Vento na popa é meio porto.
navegar com vento de feição / folgado
Mais anda quem tem bom vento do que quem muito rema.
Vá ao rio por onde vão as águas.

The relevant aspect for the meaning motivation of expressions in (5) is that, although the natural force (high tide, wave, a stern wind) is the driving force, the subject still keeps control of motion. The external conditions favor it, and it

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depends on the subject whether will use them. The HIGH TIDE concept (such as WAVE, in these cases), as SD for "THE POSITIVE", stands for an opportunity, a good chance.

2.2.

CONTROL OVER EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES is CONTROL OVER NATURAL FORCE MOTION

(6) *Quem anda no mar não faz do vento o que quer.*
vir com a maré
sem dizer água vai
(7) *deixar passar a onda*
furar / atravessar a onda
levar (a) água ao seu moinho
(navegar) entre/em duas/ambas as águas
navegar / andar com todos os ventos

In the focus of attention there is the concept of CONTROL. In expressions in (6) the subject has no control over the circumstances – the first one functions as a warning and the following two refer, in TD, to sudden events we could not foresee and over which we have no control. On the contrary, the examples in (7) imply a certain active relation towards the natural force, which brings the subject to a more favorable position. In other words, the subject *takes control of its own motion* and is even able to manipulate the natural force (e.g. balancing between different interests and an idea of opportunism in the last two expressions).

2.3.

LOSING CONTROL OVER ACTION / SITUATION / OWN DESTINY is LOSING CONTROL OVER MOTION

2.3.1.

LOSING CONTROL OVER ACTION AND ITS PURPOSE // GIVING UP // LOSING IDENTITY is LETTING ONESELF GO WITH THE FLOW (NATURAL FORCE)

(8) *ao sabor / a favor da maré / corrente*
andar ao sabor do(s) vento(s)
andar à mercê / ao sabor das ondas
correr sem vela e sem leme
(9) *(não) ir na onda*
ir / navegar nas águas de alguém // nas mesmas águas

2.3.2.

BEING DEFEATED BY EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES is DROWNING / SINKING

(10) *ir por água abaixo*
(andar) com a borda debaixo de água
Quando o mar bate na rocha, quem se lixa é o mexilhão.
Quando o mar briga com a praia, quem apanha é o caranguejo.

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The images of the last two expressions in (10) are based on the anthropomorphization of tiny sea creatures – the conceptualization relies on the contrast between their smallness and the immensity of the sea, but also on the image of a weak creature in a scrape between two powerful and resistant forces.

2.4.

FREEDOM OF ACTION is FREEDOM OF MOTION
ACTING IN DISCORDANCE WITH EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES, RESISTING THE SITUATION, THE PREVAILING ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS, FIGHTING THE EXTERNAL INFLUENCES is MOVING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION OF NATURAL FORCE MOTION

(11) *nadar / remar / ir contra a maré / corrente*
contra ventos e marés

3. THE *NATURAL FORCE* DOMAIN IN PHRASEOLOGY FROM A *FORCE DYNAMICS* PERSPECTIVE

Primarily, we would like to point out few of the most interesting observations that resulted from the analysis, thus substantiating some hypotheses that preceded this research. First, there is an indisputable connection between the notion of FORCE and the conceptualization of CAUSE, CAUSALITY or CAUSATION, both fundamental aspects of human cognition. The interdependence of these concepts has been explored mainly in the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, which reformulated the traditional linguistic notion of causation as an unanalysable concept.[5] We seem to conceptualize causation in terms of *cognitive* or *cultural models* – in other words, of *folk theories* or *naive thought*[6] – and it is, at least partially, understood metaphorically. CAUSES are FORCES is one of the primary metaphors explored by cognitive semanticists which have offered various explanations for the conceptualization of CAUSATION[7] – but basically, it's conceptualized through a scenario of force-interaction in which one entity has the natural tendency towards motion of towards rest and will likely manifest it unless it is stopped or defeated by another, stronger entity. The analysis of the phraseological units in this study has revealed, more or less, the same scenario.

Furthermore, a pertinent characteristic of the NATURAL FORCE conceptualization principle appears to be *variations in a "form (degree) of exposure"*

[5] E.g. the FORCE image-schema, one of embodied pre-linguistic structures of experience explored by cognitive semanticists as "conceptual-semantic universals" (Johnson 1987, Lakoff 1987, Taylor 1989 etc.), involves (with regard to its elements) a physical or metaphorical *causal interaction*.

[6] "[...] the conceptual models within linguistic organization have a striking similarity to those evident in our naive world conceptions, as well as to historically earlier scientific models. […] these basic conceptual structures often diverge substantially from the fully rigorous conceptions of contemporary science." (Talmy 2000: 455)

[7] E.g. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), such as Lakoff (1987), explain a prototypical causation as a *direct manipulation*. Lakoff & Johnson (1999) argue that we understand it as a *forced motion* of one object by another, from one location to another.

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to the natural force. The subject, influenced by some force, may completely lose control over its motion, or deliberately give up to the natural force, or take advantage of it, or resist it. The best model for pondering such different relations in terms of *balance between two forces*, thereby different forms of their interaction that reflect on various types of causation, is supposed to be the Force Dynamics (FD) framework (Talmy 1988, 2000), some type of reaction to a traditional (basically generativist) notion of causation. "First, the grammatical, constructional, and to some extent lexical structure of language presents an extremely simple representation of causality", that "[…] abstracts away, for example, from particularities of rate, scope of involvement, manner of spread, and the like" (Talmy 2000: 457). The Force Dynamics model sheds a new light to the topic, as "a generalization over the traditional linguistic notion of 'causative': it analyses 'causing' into finer primitives and sets it naturally within a framework that also includes 'letting', 'hindering', 'helping', and still further notions not normally considered in the same context" (Talmy 2000: 409). Due to the correspondences we noticed between Talmy's system and the structure of the NATURAL FORCE domain in (in this case Portuguese) phraseology, also based on "finer primitives", we decided to explore if FD model can be applied to phraseology, more precisely to the semantic structure of idiomatic meaning, fundamentally metaphorically motivated, of phraseological units where the NATURAL FORCE domain can be identified as SD. However, our attempt in this very work doesn't pretend to be exhaustive at all; just to give an idea of another possible way of generalization in the field of causation, which we ourselves will try to further elaborate in our future studies. Originally, the FD category referred to the semantics of causative syntactic constructions, but has been also applied, by now, to other language levels, from morphosyntactic to discursive, including the lexical-semantic (Silva 1999 and onwards); according to our knowledge, it has not yet been systematically applied to phraseology.

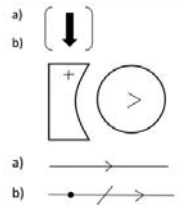
There are some basic FD parameters. The pattern implies two force-exerting (not necessarily physical) entities, one of which is singled out for focal attention (the Agonist) and the salient issue in the interaction is whether it is able to manifest its force tendency. The second force entity (the Antagonist) opposes it and it is considered for the effect that it has on the first, effectively overcoming it or not. Force entities have an intrinsic force tendency, toward action or toward rest; one is stronger than the other. Finally, the outcome or resultant of the scenario – the action or the inaction – depends on both the intrinsic tendency and the balance between the forces. As the consequence, we have various types of causation which we also identified in the motivation of the expressions from our corpus. As we will see, mostly it is not the conceptual *prototype* causation; in many cases, we rather identify the *"letting" causation* (the indirect one) than the "making" one, and even some more unprototypical configurations ("hindering", "helping", "leaving alone", "trying" etc.)[8].

[8] "'Causing' and 'letting' are, according to Talmy, the two fundamental force-dynamic patterns with a stronger Antagonist and both should be included in the general concept of causation" (Silva 2004b: 586). Besides Talmy, about the "letting causation" and generally, the FD model implications, see Silva's studies (1999, 2003, 2004a, b, c, 2005).

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We will use not more than few of the most paradigmatic examples from the corpus, diagrammed in accordance with Talmy's symbolic conventions[9]. The FD pattern in all examples demonstrates the relation between the subject and the natural force, where the subject corresponds to Agonist (Ago.) and the natural force to Antagonist (Ant.). All the patterns are grounded in the domain of physical force, but mapped to the psychological, mental and social domains.

a) *ter vento à mare // (ir / navegar) de vento em popa*
b) *Quando há vento é que se iça a vela*[10].



The example a) represents a steady-state Force-Dynamic Pattern, whereas in example b) we have a shifting tendency, with the Ant. entering into impingement, thus changing the Ago. state of activity toward motion/action. The pattern corresponding to these expressions can definitely be identified as *letting causation*. We still have the stronger Ant.; however, in *making causation* (the only one traditionally recognized), two forces necessarily *oppose* each other, that is the Ant. (causer) applies a force *against* the tendency of the Ago. (causee), so they cannot act in concert in the same direction. In "letting causation", on the contrary, the causer does not do anything against the causee's tendency; "[…] the causee acts *voluntarily and consciously and also for its own benefit*" (Silva 2004b: 581–582). The role of the stronger Ant. is "pushing" the Ago. towards the realization of its intrinsic force tendency (action).

Silva (2003, 2004b) argues that the pertinent issue is to know what "letting causation" actually is and what it reveals about the conceptualization of causation and some other notions, such as enablement, permission, negation. In his opinion, more than "indirect causation", it is better characterized by the notion of *negative causation*; because of the Ant.'s non-interference, the Ago. is "left free" to follow its own natural course" (Silva 2004b: 595–596). So, in Silva's opinion – that we share – someone can have a role of "causer" not only through his actions, but also through his omissions or abstentions – "either opting for acting *no more* or choosing *not* to act" (Silva 2004b: 596).

Moreover, what we think is pertinent here, considering the language material studied in our work, is the very notion of *control* and the balance of two forces in terms of control. Basically, causative constructions assume that the causer (prototypically, but not necessarily human) is always a controller (literal or figurative), stronger than the causee. We would like to point out that in the

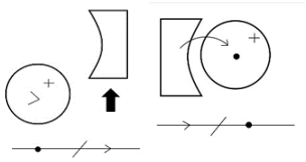
[9] The circle represents the Agonist and the concave figure the Antagonist; > or ● symbolize intrinsic force tendency toward motion or toward rest; the stronger entity is marked with +; → or —●— – resultant of the force interaction is motion or rest – and a slash on the resultant line separating the previous from the new state of activity. A shift in balance of strength is indicated with ↑ or ↓ for the Antagonist's motion into or out of impingement.

[10] See 2.1.1.

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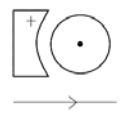
example(s) above, although the Ant. is actually the stronger entity, the Ago. still maintains, to a large extent, control over its motion.

c) *furar / atravessar a onda // deixar passar a onda*
d) *levar a água ao seu moinho*[11]



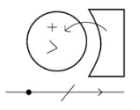
The FD framework also allows for configurations with *weaker Antagonist* which we can observe in examples above. One of the major innovations of the FD model is including the notions not normally considered in the same context with causation, such as "hindering", "helping", "leaving alone" or "trying". However, those notions are certainly not considered as prototypical; they deviate from the general concept of causation. The diagrams above show two different cases. The c) example may be ascribed to "hindering causation" where the Ant. leaving the impingement removes the hindrance so the Ago. comes to realize his internal tendency toward action. In the d) example there's also a shift – not in time or in state, but in balance of strength. The overpowering effect of the Ant. ends because it is *overcome* by the strengthened Ago. In both cases the Ago. takes control of its own motion and is even able to manipulate the natural force.

e) *andar à mercê / ao sabor das ondas / da corrente // ir na onda*[12].
f) *ir por água abaixo / com a borda debaixo de água // Quando o mar bate na rocha, quem se lixa é o mexilhão*[13].



The configuration corresponding to the e) and f) examples is the closest to the prototypical causative pattern, involving the extended causation of motion. An Ago. with an intrinsic tendency toward rest is being opposed by a stronger Ant. which overcomes its resistance and forces it to move. The outcome – negative for the Ago. – implies a total loss of control in favor of the Ant.

g) *remar / nadar contra a maré / corrente*[14]



In g) example there is a configuration which can still be included in FD model but shows the greatest deviation from the prototype of causation. We have again the weaker Ant. together with a shift in balance of strength; the Ago. overcomes the force thus getting to oppose it directly. Basically, there's the same diagram as in d) – but what differs is the resultant state.

[11] See 2.2.
[12] See 2.3.1.
[13] See 2.3.2.
[14] See 2.4.

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4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the first part of the paper we tried to expose the mechanisms motivating the meanings of Portuguese idiomatic expressions with literal meanings based on the NATURAL FORCE SD. The influence of physical *force* on physical entities, as conceptualized in mental space or in human mind, reflects one of the "conceptual archetypes" proper to a human cognitive system, which are actualized on various levels of linguistic organization, from semantic-syntactic structures to phraseology. From the analysis of the linguistic material results that CAUSATION is fundamentally perceived and understood as a FORCE. The causer in causative constructions is generally human, but our research corroborates that natural forces, although semantically inanimate, can play the role of agents, due to their ability to initiate movement and cause actions (Lowder & Gordon 2015). So what we tried to do is to check whether a model which Talmy basically applied to the grammar of causative constructions, but has also been applied in lexical semantics and discourse analysis, could be applied to the semantic structure of phraseological units – precisely, idiomatic expressions. We opted for the FD model because it extended the notion of causality to some particular notions or "categories" that traditionally haven't been considered in this context, being exactly the notions (enabling, letting, helping etc.) that we observed throughout the analysis of the NATURAL FORCE domain in phraseology. Thus getting intrigued to verify whether such semantic structures could be considered causative or not; and if yes, if they could be interpreted as some type of "analytic causative".

In this paper, this topic has just been sketched, but we intend to further elaborate it in the future. Basically, in the light of assumption that our understanding (more or less universal) of some abstract concepts like causation is organized in terms of some cognitive or cultural ("folk") models which are then reflected on different levels of language analysis.

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DOMÍNIO DE *FORÇA NATURAL* NA FRASEOLOGIA PORTUGUESA

Resumo

O trabalho é estruturado basicamente em duas partes: na primeira propomo-nos estabelecer a motivação dos significados idiomáticos de um corpus de unidades fraseológicas portuguesas, sistematizando os mecanismos – neste caso exclusivamente conceptuais – em que se fundamenta. A base de conceptualização, ao nível do significado literal, é uma *força natural* que inicia e influencia o movimento e que, no domínio destino, se traduz em circunstâncias externas que causam e influenciam uma ação.

Tendo verificado um vínculo forte entre as noções de *força* e, por outro lado, de *causa / causação / causalidade*, na segunda parte indagamos se (e como) a estrutura semântica das unidades fraseológicas analisadas na primeira parte pode ser analisada e interpretada no contexto de Dinâmica de Forças de Talmy (1988, 2000).

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