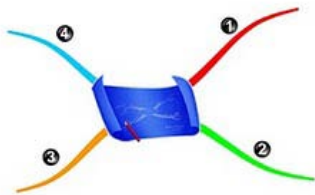## How to read and write a mind map: clockwise or counter–clockwise ?

Getting in touch with other mind mappers has allowed me to think over some rules of mind mapping. As I have already written in my previous post, I knew Hans Buskes some weeks ago and while reading his maps I noticed something particular related to the direction to follow when reading.

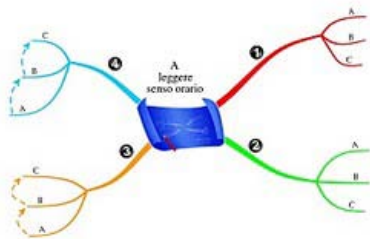Everybody knows that a mind map is written/read clockwise.
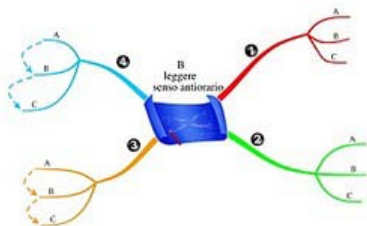

Click on photo to enlarge

The "critical" point is on the left side of the map, when from branches 3 and 4 you draw the sub-branches. After that, how can we go on?

Clockwise, that is from the bottom to the top? (As shown in **example A**)
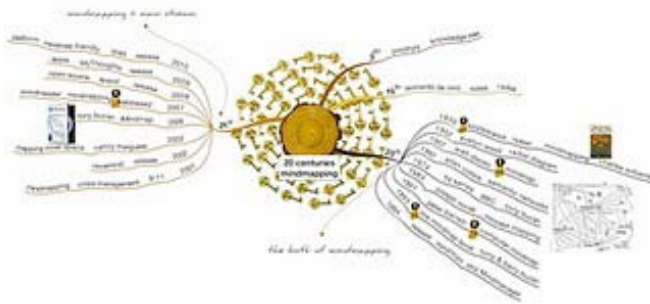

Click on photo to enlarge

Or **counter–clockwise**, that is from the top to the bottom ?(As shown in **example B**)

Click on photo to enlarge

Hans Buskes follows Example A- clockwise, as you can see in the following map
[Milestones and keystones in the history of mindmapping](#)
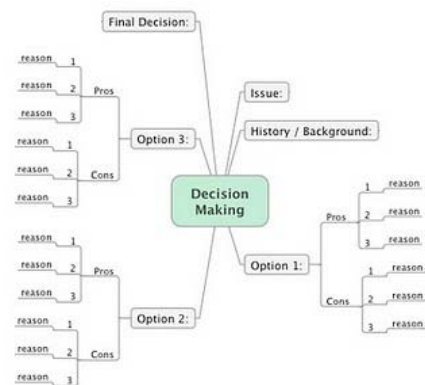

Click on photo to enlarge

You can notice that in the fourth main branch (the 21st century) the year order starts from the bottom to the top clockwise. This layout looks a bit peculiar to me because, up to now, I have always seen mind maps whose sub-branches are arranged counter-clockwise.
An example is the map [Visual-mapping-timeline](#) by [Pascal Venier](#)

Click on photo to enlarge

In these years I have always followed Example B counter-clockwise, surely influenced by the [mindmanager](#) software, with which I started experimenting mind mapping in 2004.
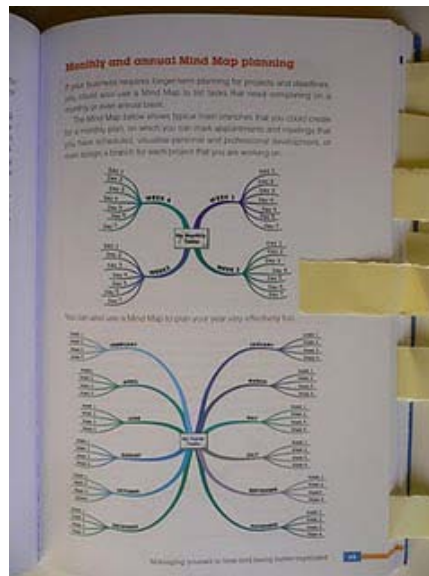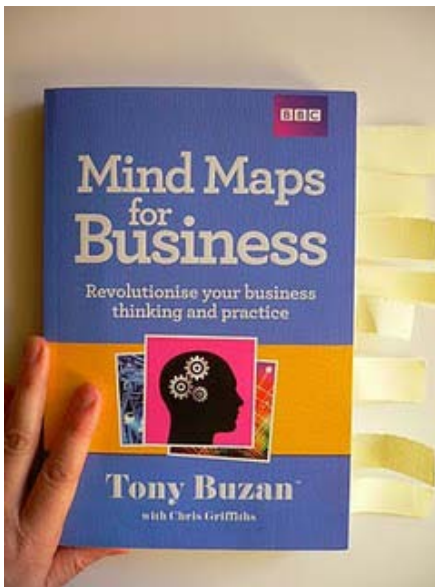
Today I have tried again to make a digital map and I have realized that the software actually "compelled" me to draw counter-clockwise. This is an example
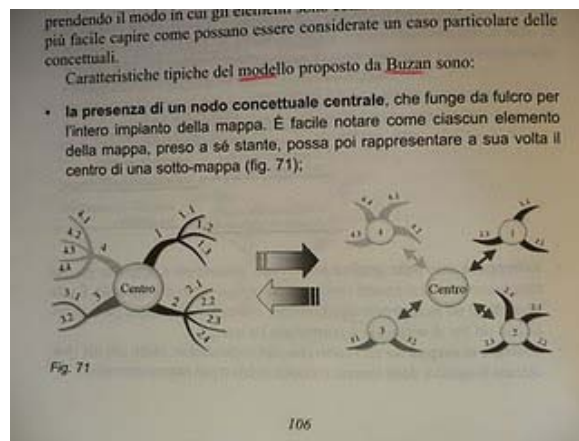

Click on photo to enlarge

At this point, I have gone back to the origins and I have read again [Mind maps](#), where Tony Buzan writes that a map is written/read clockwise, but he does not give any specific direction for the sub-branches on the left side.

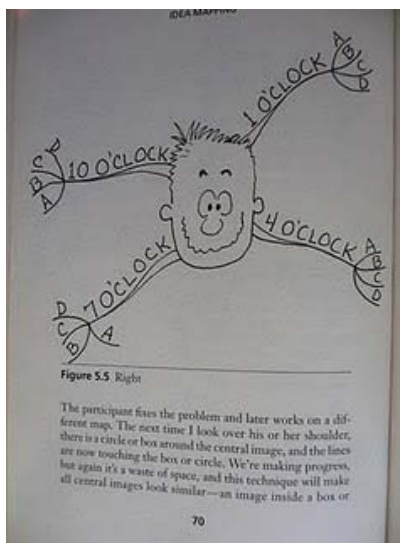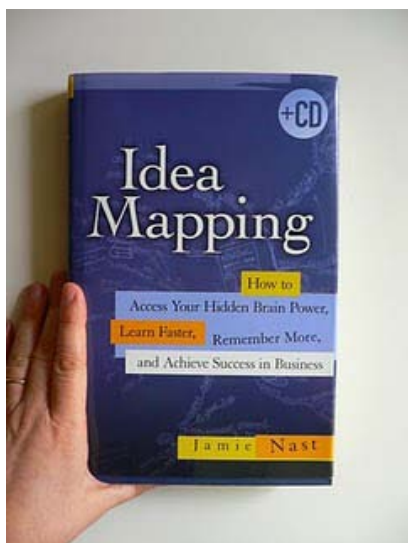After that I have looked it up in his latest book and I have found a lot of examples of counter-clockwise maps.

Click on photo to enlarge

Then I have re-read Alberto Scocco's book and also here the type-B counter-clockwise example is confirmed.

Click on photo to enlarge

As I was not satisfied, I have gone on with my research and I have re-read [Jame Nast](...)'s [book](...). Here I have found hand-made mind maps, which are instead clockwise (Example A).

Click on photo to enlarge

The results of my research are even more meaningful if compared with the data of my professional experience. During the workshops, I have noticed two different approaches to mind mapping in my pupils: those who, for the first time hand drew a map, naturally followed the clockwise direction; **instead**, those who had already used the software, were in some way conditioned and followed the counter-clockwise direction.

As far as I know, up to now only [iMindmap](...) and [Mythought](...) – published only a few years ago – permit to draw the branches freely and to make a map following the clockwise direction (in fact, Hans uses these two softwares).

At this point a relevant question!

Perhaps the mind mappers' community should find an agreement on a homogeneous reading/writing of a mind map.

At the moment I think that the biggest obstacle lies in the digital instruments in use: some of them, more rigid, permit only to operate according to Example B; others , instead, more flexible, permit to operate in both ways.

I think that we should follow our natural tendency; therefore, in the next days I will realize some mind maps following the clockwise Example A. I am really curious to see the effects.

In the meantime I would be very glad to know your opinion.
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Roma, 24 gennaio 2011   **Roberta Buzzacchino**

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by Roberta Buzzacchino