

# 1



## What is television?

Television is most easily defined by the patent, which on January 2, 1884, was registered in Berlin by German engineer of Polish/German origin Paul Julius Gottlieb Nipkow. It describes the principle of the so-called electric telescope: *"The device described here is intended to make an object located at A visible at any B location"*. It is remarkable that this principle affected twenty years before it could even be realized. **Thus television is a technological communication principle that fulfills this thesis.**

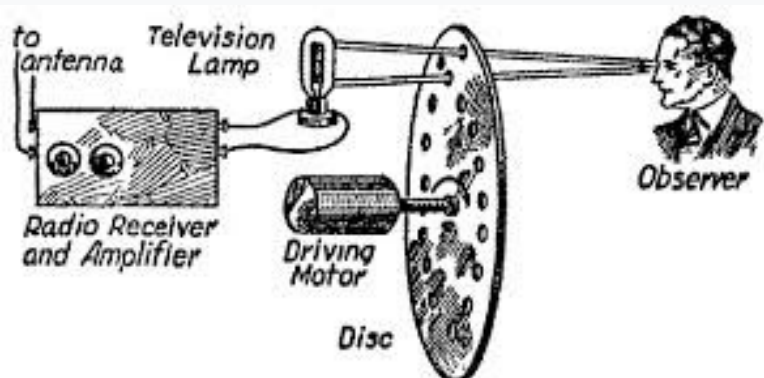
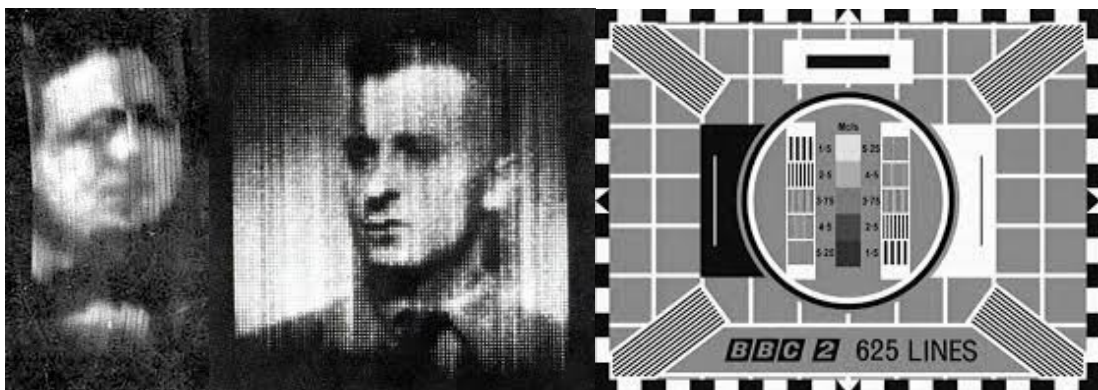


FIG. 2.—Nipkow Disc Reproduction at Television Receiver.  
[www.hawestv.com](http://www.hawestv.com)

Electrical engineering and radiophony developed dynamically throughout the 20th century. Towards the end, the evolution of electronic communication methods took a rapid pace and made any mapping unclear. That is why television is constantly lagging behind as recording formats are changing dynamically, requiring immense investments by television manufacturers in camera chains, studio equipment and check-in facilities. Not surprisingly, production technology has gone many times to dead ends, weed out patents and designs, and is the subject of competitive struggles by corporations and electronics manufacturers. On the other hand, there are TV manufacturers who have also offered an infinite range of types and novelties, ranging from tube lamps at the beginning of the century to liquid-crystal monitors at its end and now with three-dimensional perception screens. And there is also a network of transmitters, amplifiers, relay stations, various types of waves (analogue, digital) or wired cables between production technology and terminal devices, which makes it possible to spread the television signal at all. This aspect of television is of interest to low and high current engineers, science historians and television professionals and economists. Consider the task of switching from analogue to digital, how difficult it was to convince Europe and its viewers to gradually replace all their devices or at least advance the set-top-box.



But television is also **an institution**. It is generally a company with some form of legal personality, and it has its interests and goals. Even in order for a single program to appear on the television screen, there is a need for the institution to have at least two - the one that produces the program and the one that actually sends it by waves to the receivers' equipments. In Czechoslovakia, this double-track was captured at the time of the establishment of television organizations, which was first established *Televise Praha - Television Prague* (1953), which fell under the Ministry of Communications and addressed transmission technology, and then the *Ústřední televizní studio Praha - Central Television Studio Prague*, which was a part of Czechoslovak Radio (1953). Today, the transmission is provided by state Czech Radiocommunications, which manages the waves, ensures the technical quality, the sufficiency of the transmitter network, the coverage of the Czech Republic with the signal and is responsible, among other things, for converting the transmitter network from "analogue" to "digital". After 1993, a number of other private institutions with their own programs, nationwide (Prima TV, TV NOVA, etc.) and regional (Metropol TV, Brno TV), or cable (OIK Česká Třebová), also emerged. Some of them deal with the original content, some of them just take over content of other producers. The relationship between the network operator and the producers is clear: the network operator is a company managing the quality of signals belonging to the State; these frequencies, which are limited in number, shall be distributed among applicants by the Broadcasting Council; and these applicants are competing with each other. Public servis Czech Television has a specific position, the existence of which is regulated by law and financed by so-called license fees.



**Television is also a social, cultural and political phenomenon.** It is a medium that not only by its program, but by its very existence, can influence the behavior of the country's inhabitants, their daily habits, participates in shaping their values, taste, setting agenda (or topics to be discussed), ethical bar and still has a privileged position among the media given by reach, persuasiveness and illustration. In addition to entertainment and information, it is able to mediate and even create its own artworks (television film, productions, documentary television film, etc.), it can transmit them (recordings of concerts, theater performances, etc.) or convey them (film, which was in theatrical distribution) etc. And thanks to the possibility of live broadcasting, direct participation in events of any distance is, of course, the most suitable medium for sports broadcasts, cultural and social events and thus direct or indirect political action. Politicians are well aware that television (especially Czech Television in our case) is a suitable mediator between them and (potential) voters, therefore it is a professional policy to master manipulative techniques and be able to assert themselves positively on television screens. (For example, we cannot imagine the presidential elections without television debates.) Despite the fact that the members of the Czech Television's supervisor, the Czech Television Council, are elected by politicians (parliament). In this case television is a mediator between the interests of the owner of the institution (or the team, mediated by politics) and the end user, and the viewer. Both interact and their needs and interests are constantly reinforcing. From the historical, communication and theoretical point of view, the phenomenon of television is also dealt with in various scientific fields, although there is no independent field for television research. Television theory can be found in various parts of sociology, media studies, film science and culturology, but for studying television we have to turn to foreign sources, because in the Czech Republic,

with the exception of the promising 1960s, it does not pay much attention to television theory. But it is true that media convergence has focused theorists' attention on television and its new position in last years in the Czech Republic.



It should not be forgotten that **television is also a creative space.** Television institutions employ tens and hundreds of experts to develop and implement the program. To create a broadcast scheme that is functional, mathematics is coupled with alchemy. Properly define the form of a specific program (program type, format), select the right author and bring to the winning end and the content itself, is associated with considerable effort. Producers and TV broadcasters look for their authors (or other producers), or encourage them to work together to offer them a clear but pre-determined creative space. It is difficult for authors to accept the thinking of television workers, let's face that some television employees are still unable to respect creative freedom to this day. Nevertheless, the factual program that the viewer ultimately watches on screen is created in concert, in collaboration with producers, dramaturgy, production units and authors, it is a space for unexpected solutions, is open to new procedures and set up communication bars. Primitive routine shows as well as specific art or otherwise demanding works.



Television in our conception is:

- 1) technological principle
- 2) institution
- 3) communication medium with social function
- 4) creative space.

And these four possible aspects of what television may be have a common denominator, **the market**. Although we were first brought up for almost forty years by a television culture outside the market environment in socialist era, after 1989 we witnessed a dynamically developing market for television content and concepts, both original and adopted, respectively. available satellite, cables, etc. The market, let's say a certain number of viewers, fighting the increasing number of sellers, who on the one hand can thank to digitization of the possibility of small television stations, on the other hand, digitization destroyed many of them. It is becoming increasingly difficult to assert itself, to engage, to intrude in the favor of the viewer, and once it has succeeded, it is difficult to force him not to switch. And all this happens not for love of neighbor, altruism or desire to inform, entertain and mediate catharsis by piece of art, but so that the appropriate (measurable)

**audience can be sold at the moment to the advertiser.** Someone for whom it is advantageous to reach just such a target group at once. The audience is permanently traded, they are offered as a "hare in a bag" to wealthy and advertising-eager companies. Television producers and broadcasters use every means at their disposal to withstand, which is no wonder or criticized.

Consciousness of the market and its laws, its analysis, should lead us to understand communication principles and reasons for their use. However, this does not mean that some of the parties (authors, producers and viewers) should completely subordinate themselves to the market at the expense of losing moral credit or losing such precious confidence and time. However, this depends on the individual.

Text © M. Štoll, 2020

There are no rights to pictures. Just illustration for internal study need.