The Inversion Principle

Why Secrecy Is Now the Only Way Your Ideas Can Be Stolen

Will Glynn, February 2025

Sequel to: The Transparency Theorem & The Provenance Thesis (Glynn, 2025)

The Old Rule

Keep your ideas secret, or they'll be stolen.

Under intellectual property law, ideas were vulnerable the moment they were shared. Protection required secrecy first, then legal filing (patents, copyrights, trade secrets), then enforcement through courts. The entire system assumed that sharing an idea meant losing control of it.

This created a culture of hoarding. NDAs before every meeting. Stealth mode until launch. Patent filings before publication. The cost of protection was silence — and silence slowed down everything.

The Inversion

The Transparency Theorem proved that code privacy is collapsing. The Provenance Thesis proved that a public contribution graph replaces IP with something strictly superior. Together, they produce a single, counterintuitive result:

The new rule: Publish your ideas immediately, because secrecy is the only way they CAN be stolen.

Here is why.

The Logic

Idea theft requires one condition: **information asymmetry**. The thief knows you had the idea. No one else does. Without witnesses, there is no proof of priority. Without proof, the thief's claim is as good as yours.

A public contribution graph eliminates information asymmetry at the moment of contribution:

1. You post your idea — timestamped, immutable, publicly visible
2. Anyone who builds on it creates a causal edge back to your post
3. Shapley attribution traces value to you automatically
4. There is nothing left to steal — priority is already proven

Under this model, idea theft is not *punished*. It is *structurally impossible*. The timestamp exists before anyone attempts to claim your work. Prevention, not punishment.

Now consider secrecy:

1. You have an idea and tell no one
2. You tell one person privately — no record
3. They build it, claim it was theirs
4. You have no proof. No timestamp. No graph entry. No recourse.

Secrecy is the vulnerability. Publication is the protection.

The Comparison

	Old Model (IP Law)	**New Model (Contribution Graph)**
Protection mechanism	Legal punishment after theft	Structural prevention of theft
Cost of protection	$10,000+ and years of legal process	Zero — posting a message is free
Requirement	Keep idea secret until filing	Publish idea immediately

	Old Model (IP Law)	New Model (Contribution Graph)
Failure mode	Idea shared without filing = vulnerable	Idea kept secret = vulnerable
Who can afford it	Corporations with legal teams	Anyone with an internet connection
Time to enforce	Years	Instant (timestamp already exists)

Why This Matters

For the entire history of innovation, the default advice to creators has been: *don't share until you've protected yourself.* This advice was correct under IP law. It is now inverted.

Every moment you sit on an idea without publishing it is a moment someone else could independently arrive at the same idea and publish first. In a world with AI accelerating development, independent invention is no longer rare — it is constant. The race is not to build first. The race is to *record* first.

The contribution graph turns the act of sharing from a risk into a shield. The messenger is protected by the message.

"Keep your ideas secret and they can be stolen. Publish them and they can't. That's the inversion."

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Glynn, W. (2025). "The Inversion Principle: Why Secrecy Is Now the Only
Way Your Ideas Can Be Stolen." VibeSwap Protocol Documentation. Feb 2025.

Depends on:
  Glynn, W. (2025). "The Transparency Theorem."
  Glynn, W. (2025). "The Provenance Thesis."
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