Zestera PUBLICATIONS ISSN: 3070-0523

International Journal of
LAW, ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal
www.zesterapublications.com

Original Research Paper

OmniSync: A Multi-Service Collaborative Workspace Platform for Distributed Team Project Management and Real-Time Collaborative Development

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***Abstract*—This paper presents OmniSync, a self-hosted, multi-service collaborative workspace platform designed for distributed team project management, agile task orchestration, and real-time collaborative development. The system integrates three microservices (Auth Service, Task Operational Service, and Canvas Service) deployed on DigitalOcean using Docker containers, with PostgreSQL (Neon) for persistence, Redis for caching and job queueing via BullMQ, and a Next.js frontend hosted on Vercel. The Auth Service implements stateless JWT-based authentication with email verification and secure token lifecycle management. The Task Operational Service enforces comprehensive role-based access control (RBAC) for workspace, project, and issue management, with support for OWNER, ADMIN, MEMBER, and VIEWER roles. The Canvas Service (in development) will provide high-concurrency collaborative editing using Elixir/Phoenix OTP. The platform incorporates BYOK (Bring Your Own Key) AI features enabling users to leverage OpenAI, Google Gemini, or self-hosted LLMs for intelligent suggestion generation without server-side API key storage. We present a comprehensive system architecture, database schema design with UUIDv7 primary keys, detailed RBAC matrix with granular permission controls, and multi-layer authorization patterns. Evaluation demonstrates robust support for 10+ concurrent operations, sub-50ms authorization checks, and seamless multi-tenant isolation, enabling effective project coordination for small to medium-sized distributed teams. The platform's microservice architecture, containerized deployment model, and event-driven user synchronization via BullMQ establish a scalable, maintainable foundation for enterprise team collaboration.**

***Index Terms*—Multi-service Architecture, Role-Based Access Control, Collaborative Development, Project Management, Microservices, NestJS, Next.js, PostgreSQL, Redis, BullMQ, WebSocket, Docker, Multi-tenancy, BYOK AI, Agile Project Management**

I. Introduction

Team collaboration and distributed project management have become essential capabilities in modern software development organizations. Remote and hybrid work models demand robust platforms for real-time task coordination, artifact sharing, and asynchronous communication. Existing solutions such as Jira, Monday.com, and Asana provide comprehensive functionality but often lack flexibility for self-hosted deployments, integrate poorly with custom development workflows, and impose significant licensing costs [1].

The convergence of several technological trends enables a new generation of collaborative platforms: (1) containerization and microservices architectures reduce deployment complexity and operational overhead, (2) modern JavaScript frameworks (React, Next.js) deliver responsive, collaborative user interfaces, (3) managed database services (PostgreSQL on Neon) eliminate database administration burden, (4) job queue systems (BullMQ on Redis) enable reliable asynchronous processing, and (5) large language models provide intelligent suggestion and analysis capabilities without requiring specialized ML engineering.

This paper presents OmniSync, a purpose-built collaborative workspace platform architected as a multi-service system with clear separation of concerns: authentication and identity management (Auth Service), task and project orchestration with fine-grained access control (Task Operational Service), and real-time collaborative editing (Canvas Service, in development). The system is designed specifically for small to medium-sized distributed teams and emphasizes multi-tenancy isolation, RBAC enforcement, and operational simplicity through containerized deployment.

The key contributions of this work are:

- A three-microservice architecture with clear responsibility boundaries and asynchronous event-driven synchronization enabling scalable, independently deployable services.
- A comprehensive role-based access control (RBAC) matrix and three-layer authorization pattern (guard → service role check → permission check) applicable across workspace, project, status, label, issue, sprint, and epic domains.
- A multi-tenant database schema using UUIDv7 primary keys, hierarchical scoping (workspace → project → issue), and cascading deletion semantics ensuring referential integrity at scale.
- A BYOK (Bring Your Own Key) AI architecture for stateless LLM-powered suggestion generation without server-

Received: 05-04-2026 | Accepted: 28-05-2026 | Published: 04-06-2026

Zestera PUBLICATIONS ISSN: 3070-0523
International Journal of
LAW, ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal
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side API key persistence, supporting OpenAI, Google Gemini, and self-hosted models.
- A detailed system architecture integrating Docker containerization (DigitalOcean), managed PostgreSQL (Neon), Redis-backed job queueing (BullMQ), frontend hosting (Vercel), and Nginx reverse proxy for unified API gateway functionality.
- Empirical evaluation demonstrating concurrent operation support (10+ simultaneous operations), sub-50ms authorization latency, and seamless multi-tenant isolation.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work in project management systems, microservices architectures, and RBAC. Section III describes the OmniSync system architecture at high level. Section IV presents the Auth Service authentication design. Section V details the Task Operational Service and RBAC enforcement. Section VI describes the database schema and design decisions. Section VII discusses the BYOK AI feature. Section VIII presents evaluation results. Section IX discusses findings and limitations. Section X concludes with future directions.

II. Related Work

A. Project Management and Collaboration Platforms

Traditional project management systems such as Microsoft Project and Asana introduced digital task tracking but lack real-time collaboration and flexible multi-tenancy [2]. Recent platforms including Jira (Atlassian), Monday.com, and Notion provide richer functionality but impose strict SaaS-only deployment models, limiting organizations' control over data location and infrastructure decisions. Open-source alternatives such as Plane and OpenProject provide self-hosted options but often lack production-ready operational maturity or comprehensive feature sets [3].

The rise of agile methodologies has driven demand for sprint-based planning, burndown tracking, and inter-dependent

Multi-tenancy in SaaS systems requires robust isolation mechanisms at the data (database-level and row-level filtering), API (request routing and rate limiting per tenant), and authentication (tenant-scoped token claims) layers [8]. OmniSync implements multi-tenancy through workspace scoping: all data belongs to a workspace, all API requests validate workspace membership, and authorization checks occur at both workspace and resource levels.

C. Role-Based Access Control

RBAC, introduced by Ferraiolo and Kuhn [9], assigns permissions to roles rather than individual users, simplifying permission management at scale. RBAC has been extended with attribute-based access control (ABAC) and fine-grained authorization systems, but the core RBAC model remains dominant in operational systems due to its simplicity and effectiveness [10].

A critical design decision in RBAC systems is whether to check permissions at the API gateway, service layer, or database layer. Bhardwaj et al. [11] demonstrated that distributed authorization checks across multiple layers improve both security (defense-in-depth) and performance (early rejection of invalid requests). OmniSync implements this three-layer pattern: initial guard validation of credentials, service-level role checks via workspace membership queries, and resource-level permission validation before mutations.

D. Database Schema Design for Multi-Tenant Systems

Multi-tenant database schema design trades off between isolation (separate schemas or databases per tenant) and resource efficiency (shared schema with tenant-scoped filtering) [12]. The shared-schema approach is more operationally efficient but requires careful constraint design and query filtering to prevent cross-tenant data leakage. OmniSync uses shared schema with workspace-scoped filtering: every table includes a workspace$_i$*df oreignkey, andqueriesfilterbyworkspace$_i$dattheservicel*

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issue management. However, implementing these features with appropriate access control, audit trails, and real-time synchronization requires careful system design. Sukamto et al. [4] analyzed the design patterns of successful collaborative tools and identified role-based access control, transactional consistency, and event-driven state synchronization as critical architectural requirements.

B. Microservices and Multi-Tenant Architecture

The microservices architectural pattern, popularized by Newman [5], decomposes monolithic systems into independently deployable services with clear boundaries. This approach enables scalability and operational flexibility but introduces challenges around distributed tracing, eventual consistency, and inter-service communication [6]. Event-driven architectures using message queues (Kafka, RabbitMQ, Redis Streams) address the asynchronous communication challenge, though introducing eventual consistency semantics that require careful handling [7].

The choice of primary key type (auto-incrementing inte- ger, UUID v4, UUID v7) has performance implications for distributed systems and B-Tree indices [13]. OmniSync uses UUID v7 for improved B-Tree index locality compared to v4, enabling better cache performance in high-throughput scenarios.

III. System Architecture

A. High-Level Architecture

OmniSync is decomposed into four layers: (1) a client layer (Next.js frontend on Vercel), (2) an API gateway layer (Nginx on DigitalOcean), (3) a microservice layer (Auth, Task Oper, Canvas services in Docker), and (4) a data layer (PostgreSQL on Neon, Redis on DigitalOcean, BullMQ job queue).

The frontend communicates with backend services exclu- sively through the Nginx reverse proxy, which routes requests based on URL paths: `/auth/*` → Auth Service, `/api/*` → Task Operational Service, `/ws/*` → WebSocket gateway. This single-entry-point model simplifies CORS configuration,enables centralized rate limiting, and provides a clean deploy- ment boundary.

B. Microservice Boundaries

1) Auth Service: Responsible for user identity, authentication, and verification token lifecycle:

- User registration with email verification
- JWT access token and refresh token issuance
- Email-based password reset flow
- Token invalidation and refresh (with Redis-backed session store)
- User synchronization events to Task Operational Service via BullMQ

The Auth Service maintains minimal internal state; all session information is persisted in Redis with TTL-based expiration. This stateless design enables horizontal scaling without session affinity requirements.

2) Task Operational Service: Manages workspaces, projects, issues, sprints, epics, labels, and comments with role-based access control:

- Workspace creation and membership management
- Project scoping and project lead assignment
- Kanban board management (statuses with reorderable positions)
- Issue creation, update, deletion, and reordering
- Sprint lifecycle (planned → active → completed)
- Epic tracking and issue-epic associations
- Label management and issue-label tagging
- Comment threads on issues
- Activity logging for audit trails
- BullMQ worker for consuming user-sync events from Auth Service

The Task Operational Service enforces RBAC at three levels: workspace membership (are you a member?), role validation (what role do you have?), and resource ownership (does this resource belong to your workspace?).

3) Canvas Service (Future): Planned for the next phase, will provide real-time collaborative editing of Excalidraw- based canvas using Elixir/Phoenix OTP for high-concurrency handling.

C. Data Layer

1) PostgreSQL (Neon): Persistent relational database stor- ing all application entities: users, workspaces, projects, issues, sprints, epics, labels, comments, activity logs. Uses Prisma ORM for type-safe database access.

2) Redis: In-memory cache store providing:

- User session storage (auth tokens, expiration)
- Token blacklist for logout and revocation
- Rate limiting buckets (per-user request counts)
- Real-time presence (who's online)

3) BullMQ job queue backing

4) BullMQ: Redis-backed job queue system managing asynchronous tasks:

- User sync jobs: when a user is created/verified in Auth Service, a job is queued for Task Operational Service to replicate the user
- Future: email notifications, webhook callbacks, canvas snapshot persistence

D. Deployment Architecture

A single DigitalOcean Droplet runs four Docker containers orchestrated by docker-compose:

Received: 05-04-2026 | Accepted: 28-05-2026 | Published: 04-06-2026

Zestera PUBLICATIONS ISSN: 3070-0523

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TABLE I
OMNISYNC CONTAINER DEPLOYMENT

Container	Image	Port
Nginx	`nginx:alpine`	80, 443
Auth Service	`task-oper-app:auth`	3001
Task Oper Service	`task-oper-app:api`	3002
Redis	`redis:7-alpine`	6379

The Droplet configuration specifies persistent volumes for Redis RDB snapshots, ensuring data durability across restarts. The frontend (Next.js) is deployed on Vercel with environment variables pointing to the Nginx gateway URL.

IV. AUTH SERVICE DESIGN

A. JWT-Based Authentication

The Auth Service issues two-token authentication: access tokens (short-lived, 15 minutes) and refresh tokens (long- lived, 7 days). This pattern limits the window of vulnerability from access token theft while enabling smooth user experience through silent refresh.

B. Token Lifecycle

Algorithm 1 Token Management Lifecycle

Require: Username u, Password p
Ensure: AccessToken t_a, RefreshToken t_r, SessionId s

```
user ← FINDUSERBYEMAIL(u)
if VerifyPassword(p, user.passwordHash) then
    t_a ← SIGNJWT(user.id, expiry=15min)
    t_r ← SIGNJWT(user.id, expiry=7days)
    s ← UUID()
    REDIS.SET(s, {userId, t_r, timestamp}, TTL = 7days)
    return (t_a, t_r, s)
else
    return UNAUTHORIZED
end if
```

When a token expires, the client uses the refresh token to obtain a new access token. The refresh token is stored in Redis; revocation (logout) immediately deletes the Redis entry, preventing any future token refresh.

C. Email Verification Flow

PostgreSQL database. This event-driven approach decouples

User registration requires email verification to prevent ac- count takeover and spam:

1) User submits registration request with email and pass- word
2) Auth Service creates user with *verified* = *false*, hashes password with bcrypt
3) Creates a verification token (cryptographically secure random bytes), hashes it, stores hash in database
4) Sends verification email with link containing plaintext token
5) User clicks link, Auth Service hashes incoming token and compares to stored hash
6) If match, sets *verified* = *true* and emits user-sync event to BullMQ
7) Task Operational Service worker consumes event and replicates user (email, name, avatar, id only)

This flow prevents credentials from being synced before email verification, reducing account takeover risk.

D. User Sync Event System

When a user is successfully verified in the Auth Service, a job is queued to BullMQ with payload {*userId, email, firstName, lastName, avatar*}. The Task Operational Service maintains a BullMQ worker that con- sumes these jobs and inserts a user record into its own

3) **Permission Layer**: Check if role meets operation re- quirements (e.g., ADMIN or OWNER for creating sta- tuses)

This pattern ensures early rejection of invalid requests while maintaining clear separation of concerns.

C. RBAC Matrix for Operations

Table III summarizes permission requirements for key op- erations across the Task Operational Service:

TABLE III
RBAC MATRIX: PERMISSIONS BY OPERATION

Operation	OWNER	ADMIN	MEMBER	VIEWER
Create Project	✓	✓	×	×
Create Status	✓	✓	×	×
Create Issue	✓	✓	✓	×
Create Label	✓	✓	✓	×
Create Sprint	✓	Lead only	×	×
Add Member	✓	✓	×	×
Get Issues	✓	✓	✓	✓
Delete Issue	✓	✓	✓	×

D. Transactional Consistency

Complex operations (e.g., creating an issue with labels) use database transactions to ensure all-or-nothing semantics:

Received: 05-04-2026 | Accepted: 28-05-2026 | Published: 04-06-2026

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the two services: Auth Service never directly writes to Task Oper's database, and Task Oper can replay jobs if it crashes.

V. Task Operational Service: RBAC and Access Control

A. RBAC Model

Four roles define permission hierarchy:

TABLE II
OmniSync RBAC Roles

Role	Permissions
OWNER	Full control; can transfer ownership, manage all resources
ADMIN	Create/delete projects, manage team structure, assign roles
MEMBER	Create issues, comments, update own assignments
VIEWER	Read-only access to all resources

Additionally, a user can be designated as a **Project Lead** (via `project.leadId`), which grants elevated permissions within that project even if their workspace role is MEMBER or VIEWER.

B. Three-Layer Authorization Pattern

1) **Guard Layer**: Validate `x-user-id` header exists and matches a valid user in Redis cache

Algorithm 2 Create Issue with Labels (Transactional)

Require: ProjectId p, CallerRole r, IssueData d, LabelIds L

```
BeginTransaction()
project ← SelectForUpdate(projects, p)
newNumber ← project.lastIssueNumber + 1
Update(projects, p, {lastIssueNumber = newNum- ber})
issue ← Insert(issues, {projectId = p, issueNumber = newNumber, ...})
for all ℓ ∈ L do
    Insert(issue_labels, {issueId = issue.id, labelId = ℓ})
end for
Insert(issue_activities, {issueId = issue.id, type = ISSUE_CREATED, ...})
CommitTransaction()
return issue
```

This ensures issue numbers are never duplicated and all related records (labels, activity) are consistently created.

VI. Database Schema Design

A. Multi-Tenant Isolation

All tables include a `workspace_id` foreign key.

Queries**rvice Layer**: Call `getCallerRole(workspaceId,` always filter by workspace to prevent cross-tenant data leak- `callerId)`, which queries `workspace_members` table to fetch role
age. Unique constraints are scoped to workspace (e.g., project key is unique per workspace, not globally).

B. Entity Hierarchy

1) **Workspace**: Isolated team space, owned by one user
2) **Project**: Belongs to workspace, has a lead and a key (PROJECT-42 for issues)
3) **Status**: Kanban column within a project, reorder- able via float position field
4) **Label**: Tagging system within a project
5) **Issue**: Core work item, belongs to project, refer- ences status/sprint/epic/assignee
6) **Sprint**: Time-boxed iteration (PLANNED → AC- TIVE → COMPLETED)
7) **Epic**: Feature block, may span multiple sprints
8) **Comment**: Belongs to issue, authored by user
9) **IssueActivity**: Audit log of mutations (status change, assignee change, etc.)

C. Design Decisions

1) UUID v7 Primary Keys: UUID v7 are time-ordered, resulting in better B-Tree index locality than random UUID v4. Used for all entity IDs.

2) Human-Readable Issue Numbers: Each project maintains `lastIssueNumber` counter. Combined with `project.key`, this generates issue IDs like "AUTH-42" visible in the UI.

3) Float Position for Ordering: Status and issue positions are floats, not integers. This enables O(1) reordering: moving an item between positions 1 and 2 sets its position to 1.5, without updating other items.

4) Nullable Foreign Keys: `epicId`, `sprintId`, `assigneeId`, `parentId` are nullable, allowing issues in backlog (no sprint/epic), unassigned issues, and non-subtask issues.

5) isDone Flag on Statuses: A Boolean flag marks terminal states. Queries filter by isDone to show active vs. completed issues.

6) Cascading Deletions: Deleting a workspace cascades to all projects, issues, sprints, epics, labels. Deleting an issue cascades to comments and activity logs.

6) BYOK AI Feature

Received: 05-04-2026 | Accepted: 28-05-2026 | Published: 04-06-2026

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ISSN: 3070-0523
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7) User reviews suggestions and approves them via `/api/ai/commit`
8) Only approved suggestions are written to database

This architecture ensures: - API keys never touch the server's persistent storage (stateless) - Each request is com- plete; there's no per-user key configuration - Failures in AI generation don't corrupt application state (suggestions are separate from writes)

B. Supported Providers

- **OpenAI**: GPT-4, GPT-3.5-turbo (via standard API)
- **Google Gemini**: Vertex AI models (via official SDK)
- **Self-Hosted**: OPENAI_COMPATIBLE endpoint (for Ollama, vLLM, etc.)

This flexibility enables users to use commercial LLMs or deploy models locally based on their security/cost trade-offs.

VII. Evaluation

A. Evaluation Setup

The OmniSync platform was evaluated across three di- mensions: (1) concurrent operation support, (2) authorization latency, and (3) multi-tenant isolation. A test environment was configured with a single DigitalOcean Droplet (8GB RAM, 4 vCPU), PostgreSQL on Neon, and Redis on the same Droplet.

B. Concurrent Operations

We simulated 1–20 concurrent users, each performing issue creation, update, and read operations over 5 minutes. The system maintained sub-500ms p99 latency up to 10 concurrent users, with graceful degradation beyond that point (p99 latency
= 2.3s at 20 concurrent users). These results indicate the platform is suitable for small to medium-sized teams (up to 50 users per workspace).

TABLE IV
Latency vs. Concurrent Users (ms)

Concurrent Users	p50	p95	p99
1	45	78	124
5	67	156	298
10	89	312	456
20	234	892	2341

A. Architecture

The "Bring Your Own Key" (BYOK) AI feature enables users to leverage their own API keys without server-side storage:

1) Client provides: API key, provider (OpenAI/Gemini/self-hosted), model name, optional base URL, and a prompt or context
2) Client sends these to Task Oper Service endpoint `/api/ai/suggest`
3) Service assembles project context from PostgreSQL (existing issues, sprints, epics)
4) Service calls the specified provider using the provided API key (no storage)
5) Service returns suggestions (e.g., "epic suggestions" or "sprint recommendations") as JSON

C. Authorization Latency

Authorization checks (workspace membership lookup + role validation) averaged 12ms for cache hits (user data in Redis) and 47ms for cache misses (database round-trip). This sub-50ms latency is acceptable for interac- tive operations and demonstrates efficient indexing of the `workspace_members` table.

D. Multi-Tenant Isolation

We verified that query filters correctly prevent cross-tenant data leakage through the following test: create two workspaces with separate users, ensure queries from user A return only workspace A's data, and vice versa. All queries passed this test, confirming multi-tenant isolation.

VIII. Discussion

A. Key Strengths

OmniSync's microservice architecture enables independent scaling and deployment of Auth and Task Operational services. The RBAC design provides granular, auditable permission control. Event-driven user synchronization via BullMQ de- couples services while maintaining eventual consistency. The BYOK AI feature removes the need for server-side API key management, simplifying compliance and security.

B. Limitations

The current implementation does not support field-level RBAC (e.g., marking certain fields as visible only to project leads). Canvas Service is not yet completed and represents a significant engineering challenge due to concurrent editing re- quirements. Real-time notifications rely on WebSocket polling; a pub/sub system would improve efficiency. The synthetic evaluation environment does not reflect production complexity (e.g., slow network, Byzantine failures).

C. Operational Considerations

For production deployment, several configurations are rec- ommended:

- Enable PostgreSQL automated backups (Neon default)
- Configure Redis persistence (RDB snapshots)
- Implement centralized logging (e.g., ELK stack)
- Monitor Auth Service token issuance rates for anomalies
- Rate-limit by IP and user_id
- Use Nginx SSL/TLS termination with Let's Encrypt certificates

IX. Future Work

- **Canvas Service**: Complete Elixir/Phoenix implemen- tation with real-time collaborative editing

Received: 05-04-2026 | Accepted: 28-05-2026 | Published: 04-06-2026

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ISSN: 3070-0523 www.zesterapublications.com Original Research Paper

- **GitHub Integration**: Webhook-based issue linking and auto-ticketing from GitHub actions
- **AI Standup Summarizer**: Automatically compile activity logs into team standup summaries
- **Advanced Filtering**: Support complex query filters (e.g., issues assigned to me, in current sprint, with high priority)
- **Mobile Apps**: iOS and Android clients for native mobile access
- **Advanced Analytics**: Velocity tracking, burndown charts, team capacity planning

X. Conclusion

This paper presented OmniSync, a multi-service collaborative workspace platform for distributed team project management. By architecting the system as three independent microservices (Auth, Task Oper, Canvas) with event-driven synchronization, implementing comprehensive RBAC with three-layer authorization checks, and deploying on containerized infrastructure with managed databases, OmniSync provides a scalable, maintainable platform suitable for small to medium-sized distributed teams.

The evaluation demonstrated robust support for concurrent operations (up to 10 users with sub-500ms latency), efficient authorization (sub-50ms checks), and correct multi-tenant isolation. The BYOK AI feature enables intelligent suggestion generation without requiring server-side API key storage, addressing a key security and operational concern.

OmniSync establishes a replicable architecture for building collaborative systems that balance feature richness, operational simplicity, and security. As distributed work continues to grow, platforms like OmniSync offer teams an alternative to mono- lithic SaaS solutions, providing greater control, transparency, and customization for project management and collaboration workflows.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the support of GIFT Autonomous, Bhubaneswar. Special thanks to the open-source communities behind NestJS, Next.js, Prisma, PostgreSQL, Redis, Docker, and BullMQ, whose tools and frameworks made this work possible. The scalability and reliability of managed services from Vercel, Neon, and DigitalOcean were instrumental in enabling rapid prototyping and deployment.

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Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal
ISSN: 3070-0523 www.zesterapublications.com Original Research Paper

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Received: 05-04-2026 | Accepted: 28-05-2026 | Published: 04-06-2026