FRAMEWORK #165

Authority Arbitration Gap

DEFINITION

Multiple legitimate authorities govern overlapping portions of the same infrastructure domain, each correct within its own scope, and no arbitration mechanism exists where those scopes intersect.

FRAMEWORK FLOW

01 — The Condition
Multiple legitimate authorities govern overlapping portions of the same domain.

02 — The Boundary
Scopes intersect with no defined arbitration mechanism between them.

03 — Failure State
Composite state emerges from interaction between correct loops, owned by none of them.

04 — Consequence
The gap surfaces as a runtime incident, not a design defect — every authority validated correctly right up to collision.

Failure State: Composite Ownership Collapse

`Independent loops reconcile` → `Scopes overlap on shared resource` → `No arbitration mechanism fires` → `Composite state emerges unowned` → **`Failure surfaces as incident, not design gap`**

THE DIAGNOSTIC SIGNAL

SLICE OWNERSHIP
Ask any authority whether it owns its own slice. The answer is always yes — confidently, and correctly.

COMPOSITE OWNERSHIP
Ask who owns the composite outcome once all loops have reconciled. The honest answer is nobody — not neglect, absence of design.

TRIGGER CONDITION
Overlap is the activation condition. Disjoint loops with no shared resource never trigger the gap at all.

REMEDIATION SHAPE
Authority hierarchy, resource-level ownership map, automatic conflict resolution, composite-state visibility — architectural, not procedural.

ARCHITECTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

#135 Control Plane Ownership Boundary

RELATED · MODERATE

#135 is the absence of any accountable owner. #165 assumes ownership is correctly assigned within each scope — the gap is the missing arbitration layer between them.

#115 Control Plane Capture

RELATED · STRONG

Mirror-image failure modes: #115 is authority concentrating until alternatives become impractical. #165 is authority never concentrating at all.

#133 Policy Intent Drift

RELATED · WEAK

Shares governance lineage. #133 is one unassigned reconciler causing staleness — #165 is multiple correctly-assigned reconcilers with no arbitration between them.

ANCHOR /gitops-governance/

TRIGGERING EXAMPLE

Condition is technology-agnostic — also observed in multi-cloud ownership and platform engineering, not GitOps-exclusive.

"Every authority can correctly explain ownership of its own slice. Nobody can explain ownership of the composite outcome — not because anyone neglected the question, but because it was never anyone's to answer."