

Self-Directed AI Agents Orchestrating the Digital Supply Chain Lifecycle

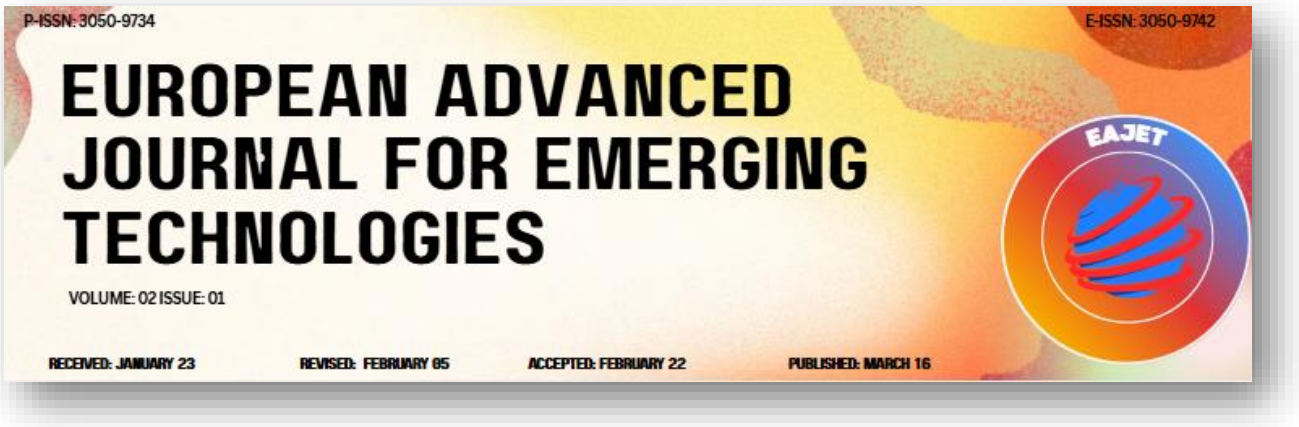
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Asst Professor

Abstract

In many industries, supply chains are undergoing new product introductions with shorter life cycles, growing product variety, and heightened customer expectations for service. Rising consumer and regulatory pressure for sustainable supply solutions reinforces the demand for greater flexibility, agility, and responsiveness. Supporting these diverse supply-side challenges requires appropriate architectural concepts, design primitives, and enabling technologies. Incorporating autonomous AI agents into digital technology solutions holds great promise for addressing these demands collectively. Unlike traditional digital solutions that represent agentless collections of orchestrator-driven features, technologies built around autonomous digital agents deploy an entirely different orchestration mechanism. Open digital networks of interconnected, contractually governed, and self-aware AI agents can sense context, decide automatically when to act, make and receive promises, negotiate collaboratively, and even resolve conflicts.

Currently available agent technologies privately communicate within mission or product delivery teams. Extending these technologies to support contractually governed agent networks at scale through appropriate support processes and infrastructure has not yet been implemented and remains a future area of research. Defining a comprehensive conceptual foundation for agent-based orchestration reveals the many camera-ready research projects it supports. An increasing number of industry project applications covering manufacturing, logistics, and retail are proving the promise of this approach by demonstrably delivering real business value. Managed well, responsible AI can thereby satisfy the conflicting yet urgent demand for intelligent technology.

Keywords: Autonomous AI Agents, Agent-Based Supply Chain Orchestration, Digital Supply Network Architecture, Contractually Governed Agent Networks, Self-Aware Intelligent Agents, Multi-Agent Coordination Mechanisms, AI-Driven Negotiation Protocols, Conflict Resolution in Agent Systems, Agile and Flexible Supply Chains, Sustainable Supply Chain Solutions, Intelligent Logistics Platforms, Manufacturing Process Autonomy, Retail Supply Optimization, Decentralized Digital Ecosystems, Context-Aware Decision Automation, Promise-Based



Coordination Models, Responsible AI Governance, Digital Twin–Enabled Supply Chains, Scalable Agent Infrastructure, Adaptive Product Lifecycle Management.

1. Introduction

The success of businesses hinges increasingly on their supply chain. A company's performance is no longer a function of what is built, delivered, or sold, but instead, how efficiently these functions operate in the case of manufacturing or ultimate system performance in the case of service delivery. The opportunities and challenges of today and over the next several years, therefore, call for end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration and the implementation of AI-driven executive dashboards. Accessible and adaptable solutions that draw data from product and process layer business networks, and relay plans to scheduling and execution systems tiered behind the executive dashboard—frequently called planning, scheduling, and execution (PSE)—are now leading edge. As indicated by the structure "Plan-Execution-Adjust," Intelligence is required not only at the Plan level but also the Execution layer and throughout the alerting mechanism that enables automatic detection, anticipation, and correction in the Execution mode. Looking ahead to 2025, what is missing is a complete self-organizing set of product, process, and system business networks.

To The end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration perspective shifts the focus from AI technologies capable of coping with the complexities, heterogeneities, and uncertainties of the actual supply chain processes to digital twins for the supply chain provides a digital replica of the actual processes and continuously learns by assimilating historical, event-driven, and real-time sensor data from the supply chain, including contextual data from the business environment that influences supply and demand patterns. The newly opened data layer and the three Operational AXEs support the incremental digital twin-based capability and service deployment that ultimately enable supply chain orchestration and other intelligence at the Execution mode.

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Fig 1: Autonomous Agent-Based End-to-End Orchestration in Global Supply Chains: Advancing AGILE20 Priorities through Digital Twins and Distributed Learning Architectures

1.1. Background and Context of the Study

Supply chains are the backbone of the global economy. They constantly transform raw materials into products and services. Supply chains pivot on the accuracy of demand signals; receiving and fulfilling orders on time, not cutting corners; operating on safely designed and secure planning premises; with mutually helpful contractual arrangements, and contract fulfilments. Supply chain patterns correlate with the business climate and its seasons; patterns



differ among supply chains for different industrial sectors, companies, products, and service levels; and disruptions add to the unknowns. Supply chains have become complex networks with much specialization in each step, distributed operations across regions, nations, and continents, with many links in the chain. Design and construction; planning and execution; and the associated information systems, processes, and systems for Complete and Guaranteed Service Delivery (CGSD) have assumed greater prominence.

Many technological, business, organizational, human, and geopolitical developments are adding to the operating pressures on supply chains and the quest to pursue agility and resilience. The current study, focusing on autonomous agents enabling end-to-end orchestration, hinges on a small subset of these developments. An initial speculation on the landscape of supply chain orchestration roles and support technology in early 2025 identifies that suppliers, 3PL providers, and retailers will increase autonomy, be user agencies of orchestration, and focus on their AGILE20 priorities of highly accurate and friendly service delivery. It adds that key technology stacks for digital automation technologies that implement such roles will comprise data architectures supporting digital twins with necessary data provenance, context, and schema harmonization; AI models performing the required functions with safety and reliability; and cloud-, edge-, and device-based learning with domain signatures on training data and learning properties.

2. Foundations of Autonomous AI Agents

Three principal aspects underpin discussions of autonomous AI agents suitable for end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration. Initial definitions clarify and delimit the notion of an autonomous agent, the specific focus on the autonomous orchestration of an entire supply chain or supply network, and the boundary conditions of such an enterprise. Next comes a consolidation of the core capabilities required for autonomous orchestration and the components of the associated agent-based systems, including the fundamental perception, decision-making, action, learning, and modularity required of supply-chain orchestration and the crucial condition of interoperability. This foundation also constitutes an assessment and selection template for development and evaluation.

For the purpose of this study, an autonomous agent is defined as any person, group, or organization that engages in a sensory-perception, decision-action-performance-learning cycle in order to interact with some environment. An end-to-end autonomous-ai-agent or agent-based-



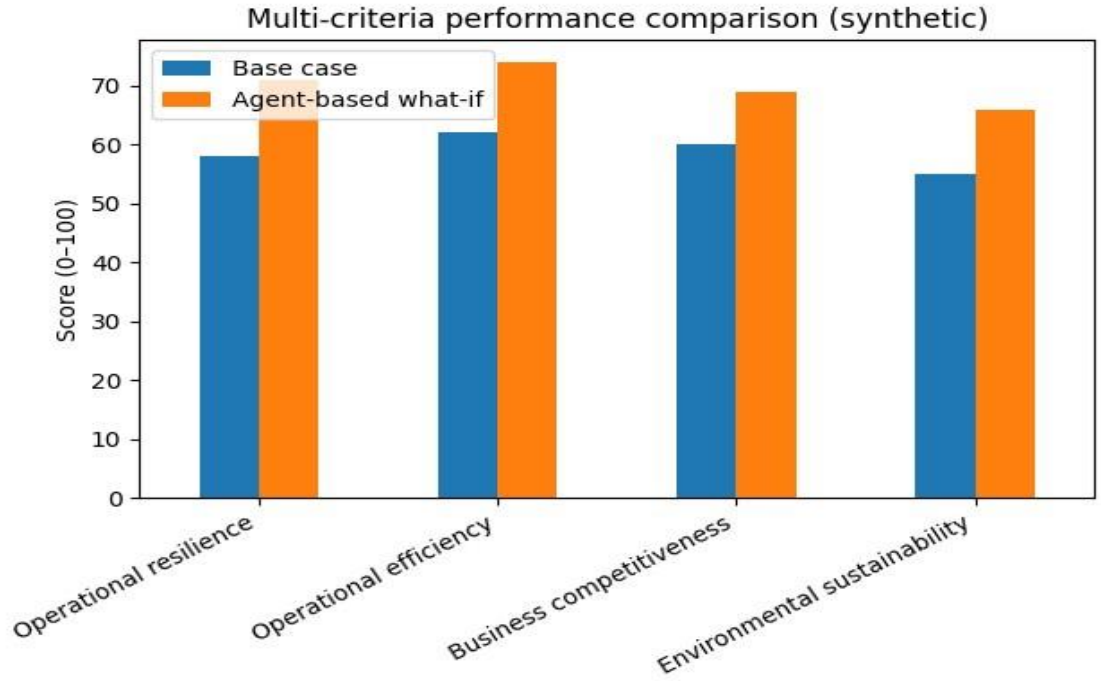
system-supported orchestration encompasses planning, scheduling, executing, and real-time feedback adjustment for a complete supply chain or supply-network flow, from the inception of customer demand to the delivery of goods, services, or experiences, and ultimately to payment. A supply-chain or supply-network task can be responds—orchestrated—by a supply network of agents, public or private, profit-oriented or not.

2.1. Definitions and scope

The analysis begins with a specification of the meaning of an autonomous agent, followed by a description of what end-to-end orchestration entails and the conditions under which it operates. An autonomous agent is defined as a software-based digital entity endowed with perception, decision-making, and action capabilities that can autonomously fulfil an objective set by a human user and can take on tasks at the discretion of other agents. Using this definition, the scope is narrowed further to address the notion of end-to-end orchestration in the context of orchestration of support and operational supply chain processes.

An end-to-end orchestration agent is considered capable of substantive planning, real-time execution, and dynamic adjustment of any of the processes that deliver value to the end customer by controlling the material, services, information, and funds flows through the supply chain. Such orchestration is performed in terms of sourcing, producing, storing, and transporting the required products at defined service levels and a minimum cost. The definition excludes major changes in business strategy, such as deciding to introduce new products, to sell through different channels, or to sell into new territories. It also excludes deployment of new technologies, such as implementation of an Industry 4.0 factory structure, since the associated decisions should typically occur at a higher level.

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Equation 1) End-to-end orchestration as an optimization problem

1.1 Decision variables (flows)

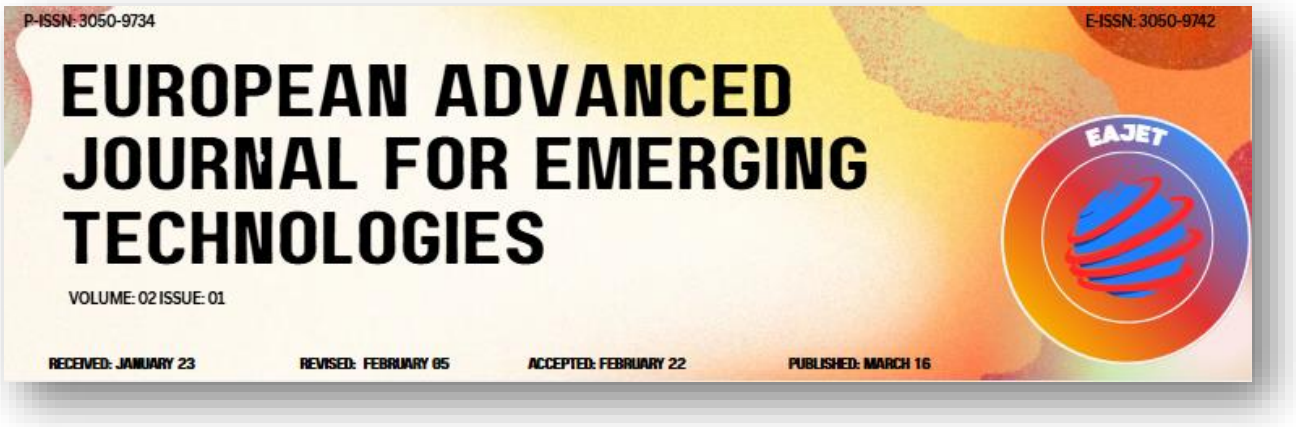
Let:

- x_{fw} = quantity shipped from factory f to warehouse w
- x_{wc} = quantity shipped from warehouse w to customer c

1.2 Cost function (what we minimize)

Let:

- c_{fw} = cost/unit from $f \rightarrow w$



- c_{wc} = cost/unit from $w \rightarrow c$

Total cost:

$$\min J = \sum_{f,w} c_{fw}\, x_{fw} + \sum_{w,c} c_{wc}\, x_{wc}$$

1.3 Constraints (step-by-step)

(A) Demand satisfaction
Each customer must receive its demand d_c:

$$\sum_{w} x_{wc} = d_c \quad \forall c$$

(B) Warehouse flow conservation
Inbound to warehouse = outbound (or inbound ≥ outbound if you model inventory):

$$\sum_{f} x_{fw} = \sum_{c} x_{wc} \quad \forall w$$

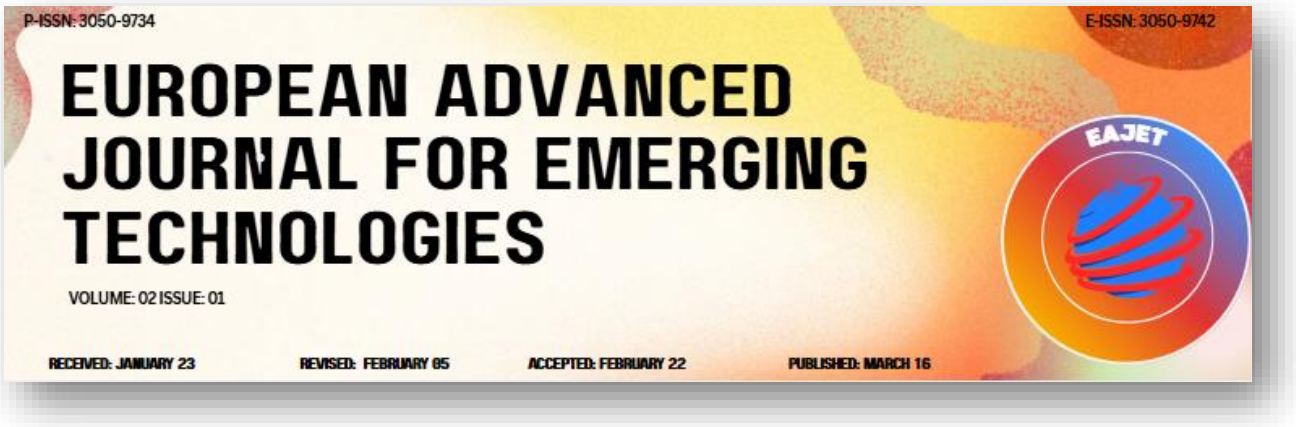
(C) Factory capacity
If factory capacity is Cap_f:

$$\sum_{w} x_{fw} \leq Cap_f \quad \forall f$$

(D) Warehouse capacity
If warehouse throughput/storage is Cap_w:

$$\sum_{c} x_{wc} \leq Cap_w \quad \forall w$$

(E) Service level / SLA constraint (delivery time)
The paper emphasizes "minimum-cost routes that do not exceed service times."
Let t_{wc} be transit time and SLA is T^{max}. Enforce:



$$x_{wc} = 0 \quad \text{if } t_{wc} > T^{max}$$

Equivalently, define feasibility indicator $a_{wc} \in \{0,1\}$ where $a_{wc} = 1$ if $t_{wc} \leq T^{max}$, else 0:

$$x_{wc} \leq M\, a_{wc} \quad \forall w, c$$

(M is a big constant ≥ max possible shipment.)

(F) Non-negativity

$$x_{fw} \geq 0, \quad x_{wc} \geq 0$$

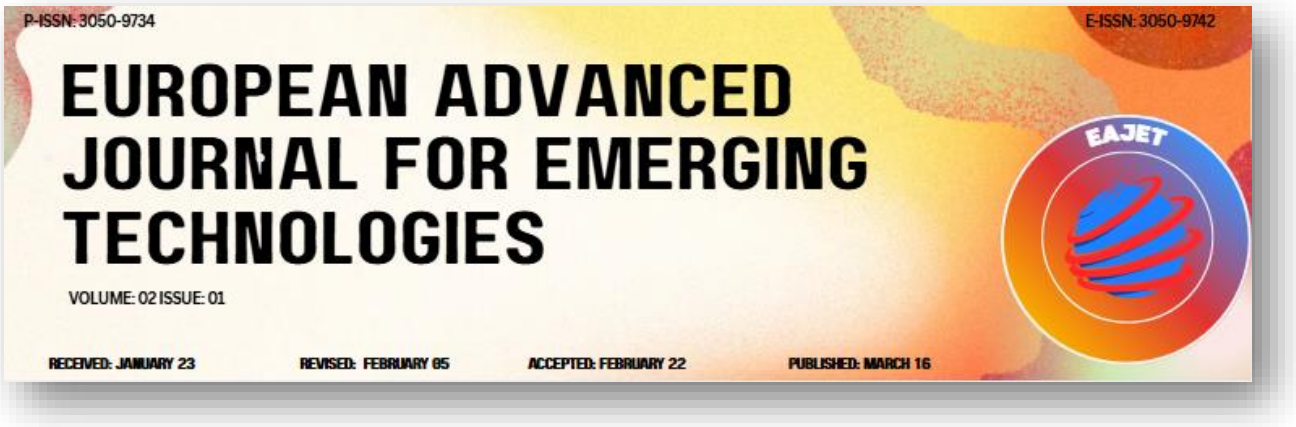
2.2. Core capabilities and architectures

Core capabilities of autonomous agents include perception, decision making, action taking, contextual adaptation, learning, and collaboration. Autonomy along these dimensions can exist along a spectrum for different task categories, for a composition of different modules within a single agent, and for an architecture that consists of separate agents for different key capabilities. Equally important for integrating heterogeneous agents into effective systems are common semantic and syntactic structures.

The perception capability corresponds to the gathering of relevant data regarding the underlying systems, including supply chain and market conditions associated with planning for the next planning period. Action involves the implementation of plans in the physical systems, which is reflected in the fulfillment of promises made and enshrined in contracts. Acting involves not only the execution of a plan but also the adjustment of plans already put in place as conditions change during execution. Learning can also take various forms, including reinforcement learning, imitation learning, retrieval-based learning, continuous adaptation, and meta-learning strategies. Interoperability requirements arise not only from typology-based differences in the composition of perceptual modules and from the handling of plans or contracts across levels but also from the ability of different application areas to synchronize activities within the same space.

3. End-to-End Digital Supply Chain Orchestration

Data and knowledge construction constitutes the entire life stage of a digital supply chain asset, starting from the early planning phase and ending with the fact that the performance of the



supply chain link is being executed. A physical supply chain runs daily through shifting from planning to scheduling, then moving to execution and finally to real-time adjusted operational management. In a digital supply chain, no piece of information is traced or received without sufficient provenance that shows origin or how the piece of information got to the current digital asset broker. The middleware requirement of schema level data provenance and interoperability will be dealt with in the next section.

The previous section focuses on planning and scheduling. In practice there is no planning and scheduling without later execution. In the context of supply chains, execution is a higher-level task or process that deals with real-time day-to-day execution of each of the planned and scheduled pieces of data transformation across the digital supply chain link per day or month or quarter. It is the task or set of daily tasks that transform the scheduling plans into true operating plans and real-time-adjusted plans, taking into account the operational (not the strategic or tactical) risk that is faced day-to-day by a physical supply chain. Autonomous AI agents may be used for the full orchestration of each of these transitions, plus real-time-adjusted execution.

Equation 2) Planning → scheduling → execution → real-time adjustment as a control loop

A compact formalization:

2.1 State, action, and transition (digital twin + execution)

Let:

- s_t = state at time t (inventory, capacity, demand signals, disruptions, etc.)
- a_t = action (shipments, production starts, re-routing, expediting)
- w_t = disturbance (breakdowns, port delays, demand spikes)

Digital twin transition:

$$s_{t+1} = F(s_t, a_t, w_t)$$



2.2 Objective over time (rolling horizon)

A rolling horizon objective (planning + execution):

$$\min_{a_{t:t+H-1}} \sum_{\tau=t}^{t+H-1} \left(\text{Cost}(s_\tau, a_\tau) + \lambda\, \text{SLA_Violation}(s_\tau, a_\tau)\right)$$

subject to:

$$s_{\tau+1} = F(s_\tau, a_\tau, w_\tau)$$

3.1. From planning to execution: a unified view

Planning, scheduling, execution, and real-time adjustment are interconnected stages that complete the life cycle of all digital supply chains. Autonomous AI agents are needed to enable both end-to-end orchestration and inter- and intra-disciplinary interoperability across these stages. During planning, agents possess the capability to analyse transport networks and asset locations and capacities, and make suitable production-assignment and delivery decisions. While the detailed scheduling of transport and production is based on these decisions, execution must ensure compliance with the contract; therefore, promises made by the suppliers in response must be treated as commitments. During execution, producers should aim to manufacture products that are just-in-time, while transport agents should aim to deliver goods using minimum-cost routes that do not exceed service times. In addition, corrective actions taken by transport agents—due to breakdowns, etc.—should be fed back into planning to make adjustments to the entire supply chain.

Data provenances should be recorded throughout the life cycle to facilitate subsequent learning. To ensure that the artefacts from the various life-cycle stages can be integrated when required, all data records resulting from planning, real-time availability monitoring, schedule execution, and unusual-event management must adhere to the same schema. Agent-based orchestration can be made functionally complete with the introduction of standard message schemas that ensure technological, syntactic, and semantic interoperability during the real-time exchange of data that support life cycles in specific industries.

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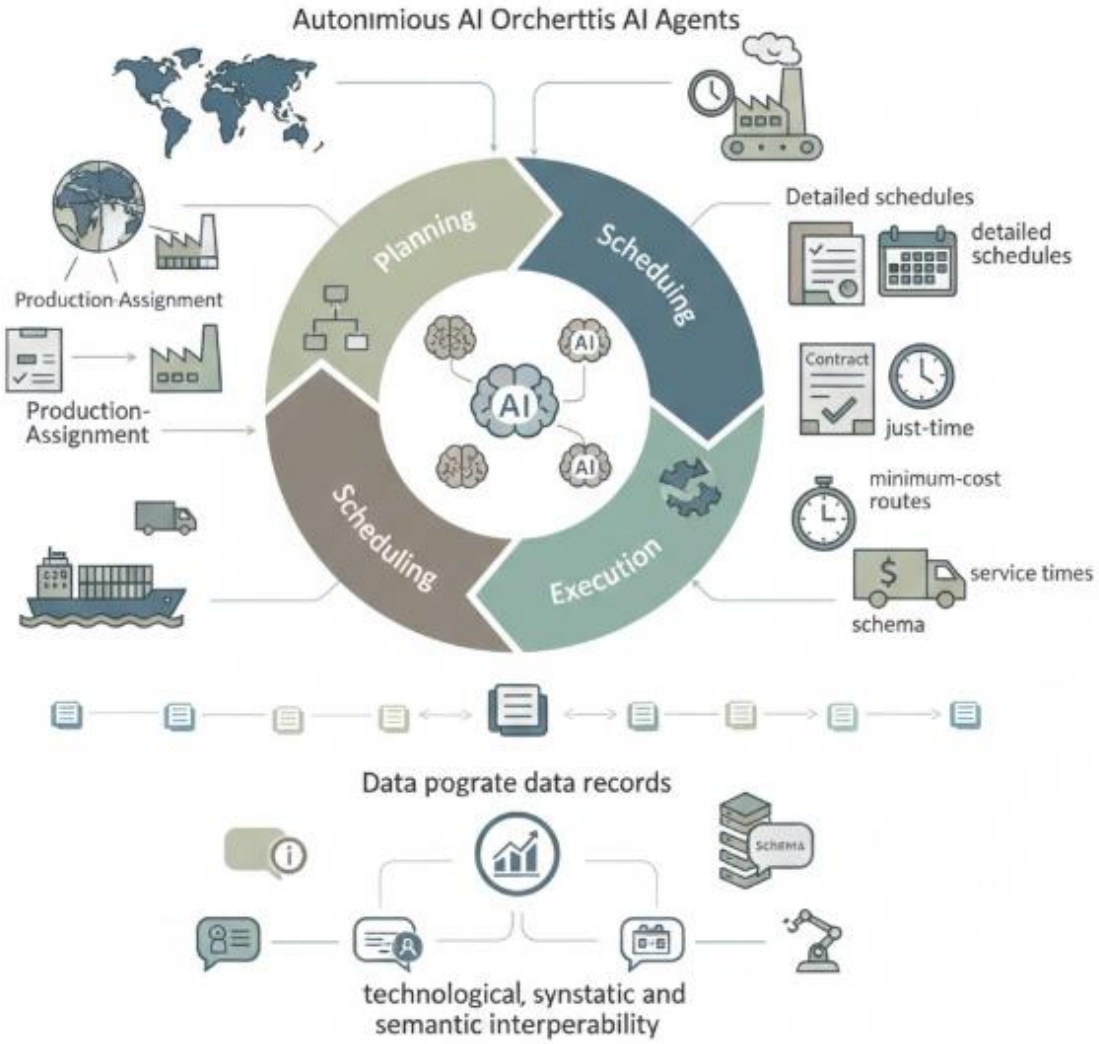
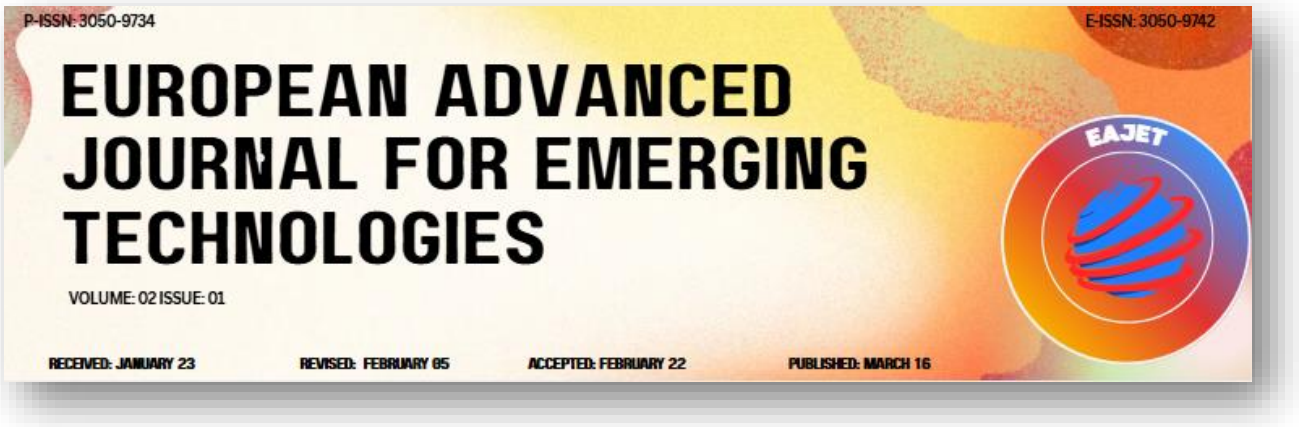


Fig 2: Autonomous Orchestration in Digital Supply Chains: A Multi-Agent Framework for Semantic Interoperability and Real-Time Lifecycle Integration

3.2. Data provenance, interoperability, and standards



Data provenance is vital for agent-based orchestration, enabling seamless cooperation and explicit guarantees. Without data providers, users cannot ascertain the quality of input data or results. Real-time decision-making, common in modern supply-chain operations, introduces additional challenges. Agent communications require unambiguous semantics for value ranges, schemas, and other variables. Inadequate formal schema can lead agents to misinterpret compatibility, resulting in suboptimal Smart Contracts. Using established industry standards alleviates these concerns.

Data provenance is crucial to build confidence in data use and prevent unintended artefacts. Every piece of data should contain a full set of metadata, specifying historical and contextual information: where it has come from, how, and when it has been acquired or created, how it has been processed (if applicable), for what purpose, by whom, using what resources, and under what conditions (both black-box constraints and electronic contracts). Mandating the use of provenance engines can support this challenge, but the focus must remain on its use and exploitation for planning, scheduling, and execution, rather than on their creation or support.

Interoperability is another necessity. For information to be shared and used successfully, agents and orchestration processes must negotiate and cooperate with different information providers. To achieve these goals, they must perceive the corresponding information or data ‘objects’ in the same way. Both the umbilical cord between the agents and the information used in the orchestration process for the creation of the individual components and the whole need to be harmonized or articulated through information schema at all levels.

The most precious condition presents the link between agents, data generators/producers, and information consumers. Information involved in triggering an agent activity must have known and defined data schema. Whenever it has a variable nature, guidelines must be provided. Moreover, other agents need to be aware of, and follow, these schema in order to be able to use data generated by others. When they do not, operational conflicts materialize. Hence, to follow the above-mentioned characters of clear and fitting principles during all stages of the agent-based orchestration, standardization represents a cornerstone capability. When agents or users join the orchestration liaises and contracts, the already known schema become part of the enabling and supporting data integration processes.



	A1	A2	A3
A1	1.0	0.8252577735555318	0.7867622802433153
A2	0.8501624123181041	1.0	0.9193085922344011
A3	0.7900389368105136	0.9699537296746681	1.0
A4	0.6949983188924627	0.7699806263199838	0.6820017906541795
A5	0.8108648371494731	0.9438239520733758	0.9503318520416911

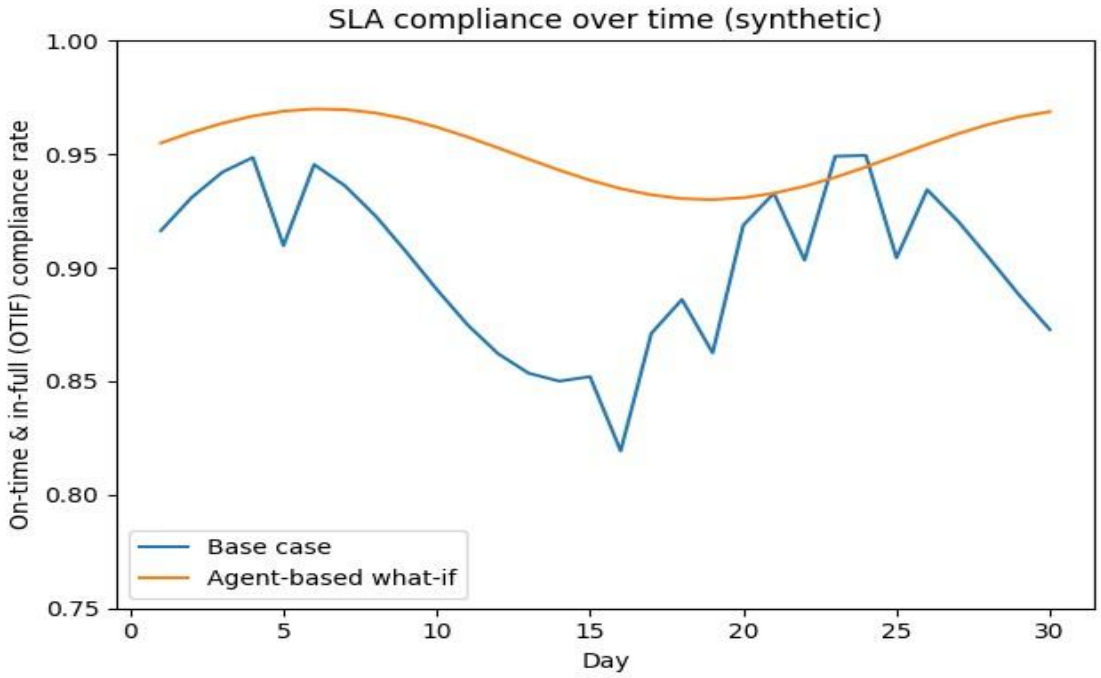
4. Agent-Based Orchestration in Practice

Autonomous Agents for End-to-End Digital Supply Chain Orchestration in 2025: A Scholarly Exploration of Concept, Technology, and Practice —

Available concepts, technology, and practices support orchestrating an end-to-end digital supply chain with autonomous agents. Key distinctions of these services are that they capitalize on the verified technology components available in 2025; cover the manage/tactician/executor hierarchy; and facilitate advanced collaboration, such as decomposition of complex goals into subgoals supported by promise/contracts, interagent negotiation and conflict resolution, and SLA enforcement via data provenance. Businesses therefore can pursue a viable strategy of digital transformation through digital twins and operate digitally known products, services, and processes in real time across supply and delivery ecosystems. Thus autonomous agents can apply core competencies of planning, scheduling, execution with feedback, and real-time adjustment to orchestrate supply chains in a unified framework.

The operational support for applying a set of autonomous agents to tackle the end-to-end orchestration challenge addresses the broad principles required but avoids technology development. Orchestration thereby allows digital planning processes at run time, while the task-execution side exploits existing execution technology. Breakthrough AI methods for complex business orchestration orchestrate deployment across the business ecosystem, from product definition, through supply ecosystem negotiation to through-life management by a twin-based service integration environment. In this context, advanced digital twins support product-service definitions, multistage supply negotiations, and integration of planned, preplanned, and real-time scheduling in a provably safe manner.

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Equation 3) Contracts, promises, and SLAs as enforceable constraints + penalties

A clean model is:

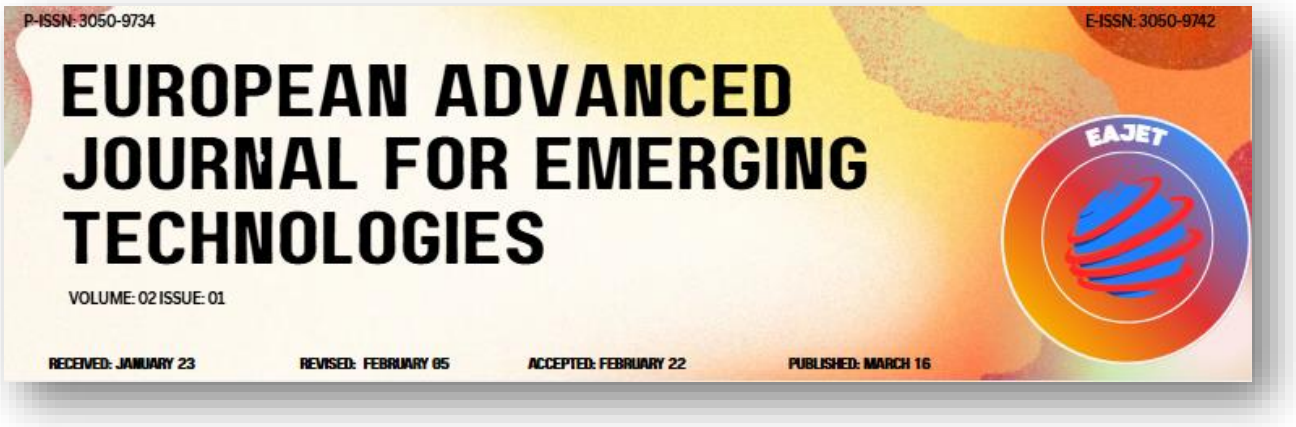
3.1 Contract as a tuple

A contract for task k:

$$\mathcal{C}_k = \left(q_k,\ d_k,\ \mathrm{QoS}_k,\ r_k,\ \pi_k\right)$$

Where:

- q_k quantity/scope, d_k due date,
- QoS_k quality/service terms (e.g., OTIF $\geq 95\%$),



- r_k reward/payment,
- π_k penalty function for SLA breach.

3.2 SLA penalty term

If δ_k is lateness (e.g., $\delta_k = \max(0,\text{delivery_time} - T^{max})$):

$$\pi_k(\delta_k) = \gamma_k \delta_k$$

or quadratic:

$$\pi_k(\delta_k) = \gamma_k \delta_k^2$$

Then the orchestrator minimizes:

$$\min \sum \text{operational costs} + \sum_k \pi_k(\delta_k)$$

4.1. Task decomposition and contract-based governance

Translating the theory of autonomous AI agents into practice necessitates the definition of processes and structures that guide their orchestration and interactions. Although nearly every complex process—such as supply chain orchestration—can benefit from the collaboration of multiple agents, task distribution is seldom voluntary. Agents must have their work packages defined and delegated, and although they may negotiate additional collaboration, the ultimate responsibility for delivery remains with them. Therefore, a hierarchy of agents and contract-based management is required.

Complex tasks, including end-to-end supply chain orchestration, are decomposed into subtasks that can be collectively executed by a combination of autonomous AI agents. A task decomposition strategy subdivides the overall problem into smaller pieces based on the concepts of contracts and promises. Agents at any level in the hierarchy can handle these tasks autonomously or decompose them further. Furthermore, some properties can be negotiated and established among sibling agents. Progress for each task is monitored according to service-level agreements (SLAs), and these are actively enforced via promises. Orchestration contracts are



defined for parent agents, and Owners are designated for every task. These Owners own the associated promises and bear ultimate responsibility for fulfilling the associated contracts.

4.2. Negotiation, collaboration, and conflict resolution among agents

Consider a typical task in a supply chain algorithm. The details of the task are known. The structure of the supply chain is also known; it consists of a hierarchy of the necessary activities and resources. However, the specification of some specific resources that must perform the activities is not known. Rather than a plan that specifies a sequence of activities, the plan may be viewed as a sequence of promises among the resources that have been assigned the activities, where the assigner can be considered the source of the contract, and such a source can be considered as a Contracting Agent for the activity.

Consider this a one-shot negotiation. Two agents are involved, the Contracting Agent and the Contractee. The latter is assigned the task of performing the activity. The Contracting Agent knows not just the Contractee agent, but also the Contractee's reputation matrix that includes information on the performance by the Contractee for previous contracts with all other agents. The Contracting Agent knows the Contractee's strength in performing the activity well, and so it also knows the maximum reward it is willing to give for carrying out the task. This is also its reservation value for the activity. The Contracting Agent issues a contract requesting a specific reward for performing the activity.

The agent that has a preference for performing this activity, checks if it is able to successfully carry out the task. If it feels that it can implement the task, it will check for its reservation value. It will also compare the reward offered in the contract with its reservation value. If the offered reward is more than the agent's reservation value, it will accept the contract. Otherwise, it will reject it. Once the Contracting Agent receives a commitment from the Contractee, and if the task is still available to be performed by any agent, the Contracting Agent will offer to the agents assigned the preceding activity a contract requesting their services.

5. Technology Enablers and Platforms

Various software and hardware platforms, tools, and building blocks support the implementation of an agent-based business process orchestration style. Most of these tech stacks are not exclusive to agent-based orchestration; they can also be applied to other orchestration styles within the digital supply chain. However, they become absolutely essential when



addressing the specific requirements of real-time decision-making in a rapidly changing environment, especially when combined with an agent-based approach.

The comprehensive design of the data layer represents a first major requirement. Without a sound and robust data architecture, encompassing all of the data sourced and consumed by the digital supply chain and guaranteeing the homogeneity of its schema, fulfilling the need for a single source of truth becomes impossible. The digital-state representation carried by the digital twin then ensures that what-if analyses can indeed be carried out through a simulation of scenarios before they are enacted. The predictive capability, whether included in the digital twin or not, empowers agents whose actions require anticipation of future events.

5.1. Data architectures and digital twins

The data architecture of the future digital supply chains must support end-to-end orchestration and deliver all the aspects previously discussed, together with the agents required to manage the orchestration. Data must therefore be available in real-time, for internal and external demand and supply, and the schema must be well described and managed along its provenance to permit the correct orchestration of all of the planning, scheduling, and execution processes. Orchestration fundamentally depends on this provenancing of data and its generation by digital twins at the planning, scheduling, and execution levels. Data from all three levels can be integrated in operational databases at the planning, scheduling, and execution levels—possibly integrated by digital twins—and with at least the execution databases continuously feeding the digital twins for simulation and "what-if" analysis and even for training purposes of generative models.

A digital twin can be defined as a living model of a physical asset, which is kept up to date with real-time data, including through sensor data feeds, and whose purpose is to support the management and maintenance of this asset, helping to reduce the total cost of ownership and downtime, while maximizing return on assets. In principle, therefore, for supply-chain orchestration, one can have three levels of digital twins, corresponding to the planning, scheduling, and execution levels of the supply chain: the physical supply chain plus its assets, managed at the planning level; the physical supply chain, possibly also managed at the scheduling level; and the physical supply chain with the planned logistics flows. Data architecture must be particularly focused on the approval of a complete taxonomy of all approval

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attributes in each operational SLA and the concrete proof that all planned SLAs fulfill those approval attributes.

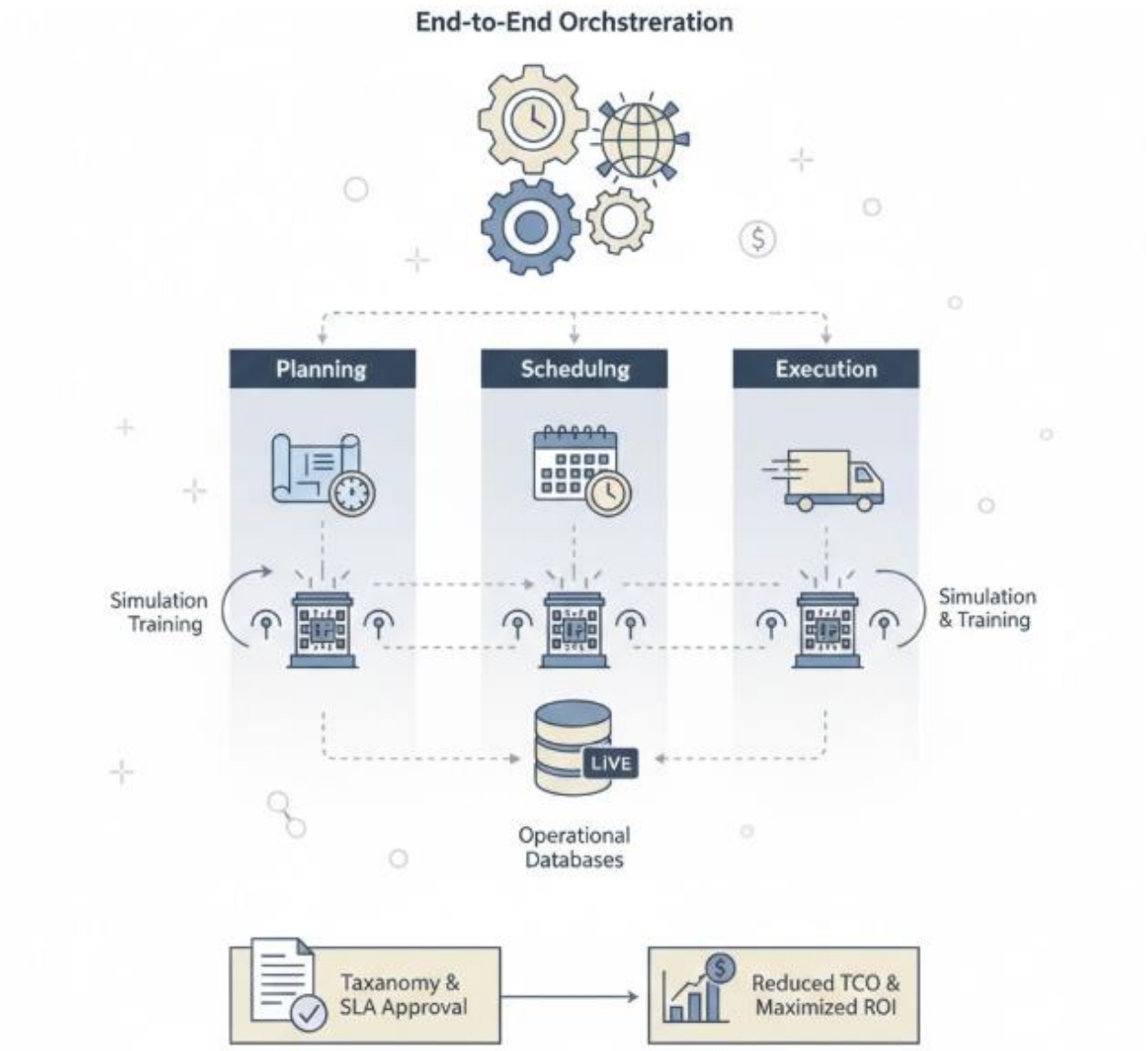




Fig 3: Multilevel Digital Twin Architectures: Real-Time Provenance and SLA-Driven Orchestration in Digital Supply Chains

5.2. AI models and learning paradigms suitable for orchestration

The evaluation of AI models and learning paradigms capable of fulfilling supply chain orchestration functions structures the exploration of suitable technology enablers. Planning models, reinforcement learning, retrieval-based methods, and hybrids are recognized as relevant broader-environment learning paradigms. Metrics capable of tackling sufficient-completeness-quality-safety requirements constitute a second avenue, delineating effective training approaches (also toward data efficiency). Finally, considerations regarding the learning paradigm owned by the agents learning the different supply chain functions should guide model and platform selection.

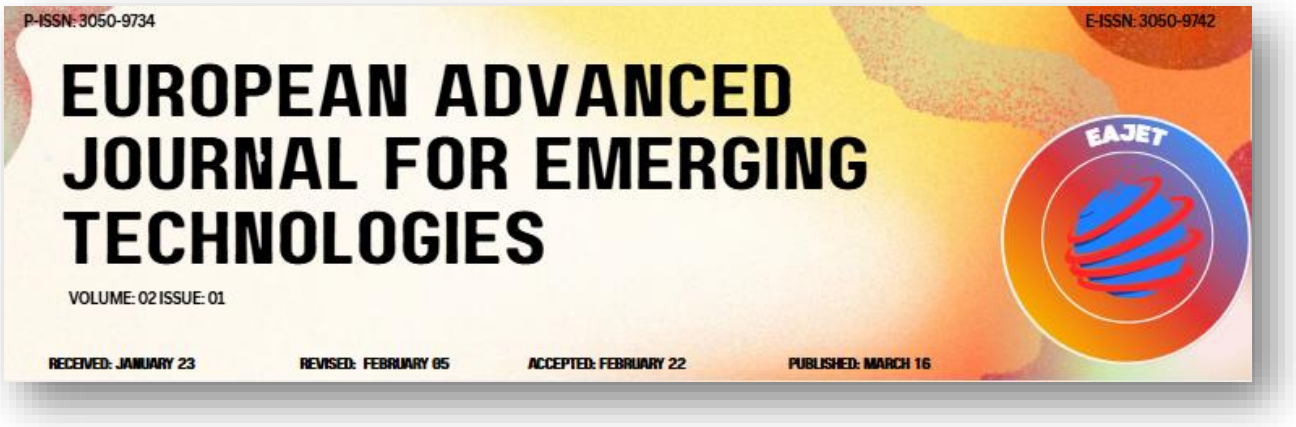
Reinforcement-learning strategies own the advantage of being model-free, eliminating the need to set up a simulation of the environment. Nevertheless, they are associated with limited proven safety and adaptability for real-life settings, and the training demands of proper safety and adaptability would often make the approach data-unfriendly. Supply chain planning or other logical models usually provide formal guarantees on similarity in their learning-process outputs under different conditions, granting similar decisions when supplied with similar contexts—an essential feature to ensure safe cooperation among agents. Successful adoption of reinforcement-learning models is mostly associated with sufficient amounts of saved parameterized data, as in Batch-Constrained Q-learning, Dyna-Q, or model-based approaches. However, problems encountered with data use and generation, reliable enough safety, and plan use for exploration in uncertain situations fuels attempts to devise other more adaptive paradigms.

Equation 4) One-shot negotiation: acceptance rule from reservation values

4.1 Contractee's decision (step-by-step)

Let:

- Offer (reward) = p
- Contractee reservation value = RV



Rule:

Accept $\Leftrightarrow p \geq RV$ Reject $\Leftrightarrow p < RV$

4.2 Acceptance probability (if reservation value is uncertain)

If the Contracting Agent only knows a distribution of RV, then:

$$P(\text{Accept} \mid p) = P(RV \leq p) = F_{RV}(p)$$

	Base case	Agent-based what-if
Operational resilience	58	71
Operational efficiency	62	74
Business competitiveness	60	69
Environmental sustainability	55	66

6. Case Studies and Empirical Evidence

Industry applications of autonomous agents for end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration have been implemented across various domains in manufacturing, logistics, and retail sectors. The primary focus has been product development, equipment maintenance, transport planning, order management, and inventory replenishment. The results indicate significant potential for leveraging autonomous agent technology in the digital supply chain domain, although limitations also exist. There are a lack of empirical case studies directly validating the end-to-end orchestration concept. However, several case studies implementing autonomous agents align with the underlying principles of contracting, decomposition, negotiation, collaboration, and real-time adjustment.

A comprehensive set of metrics is required for performance evaluation and empirical validation of end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration in general, and for specific implementations using autonomous agents in particular. Metrics must include both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Qualitative metrics should focus on the underlying data management, service-oriented architecture, and modularity. Quantitative metrics should support multi-criteria evaluation across at least four aspects of supply chain performance: operational resilience,



operational efficiency, business competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. Data collection methods for quantitative evaluation must be matching the identified metrics.

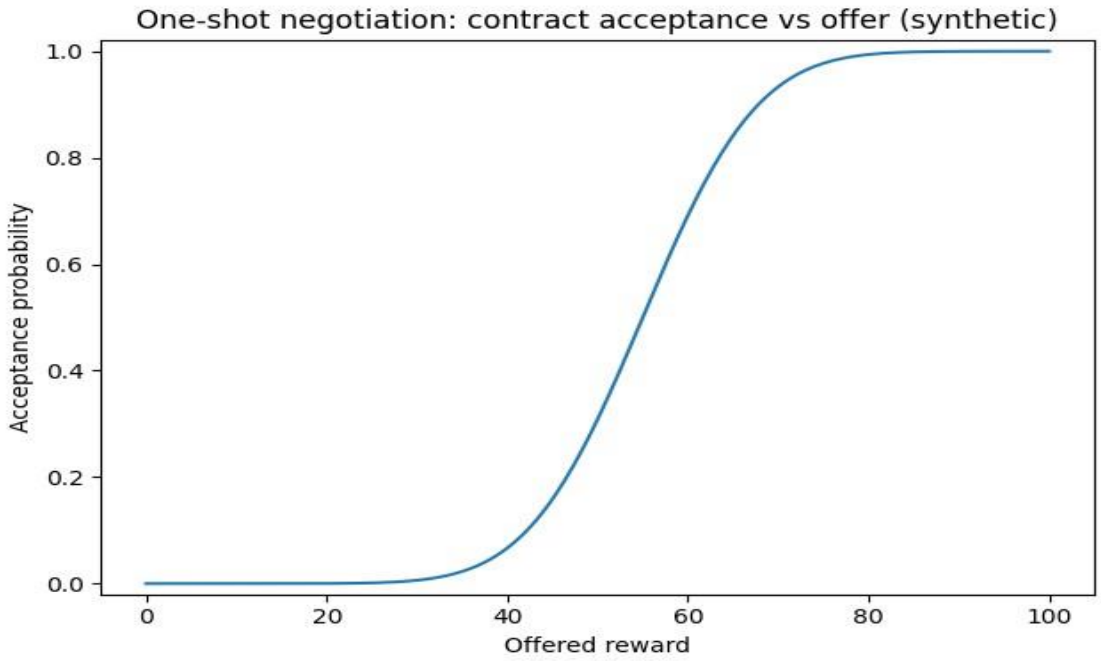
Benchmarking protocols should specify the selection of three prospective supply chains featuring similar products and operating ideas yet differing in maturity of digital technology adoption. Each supply chain's performance should be simulated as a base case, with subsequent What-If scenario simulations incorporating improved supply chain technologies following progress over a period of time. Performance in the What-If scenarios should be compared to that of the base case using the defined metrics.

6.1. Industry applications across manufacturing, logistics, and retail

Manufacturing, logistics, and retail companies are already using autonomous agents for end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration based on the principles outlined. The NESTOR project at the University of Warwick employs a hierarchy of more than 50 AI agents in a digital twin framework to simulate and optimize the orchestration of a distributed manufacturing and supply network and manage a multi-faceted business challenge at a group level—not just in sales and revenue generation but also in delivering sustainable environmental and social performance goals. Automatically generated contracts between the high-level supervisor and lower-level agents that decompose the orchestrating tasks capture aspects of service-level agreements in a service-oriented architecture and are a foundation for business-to-business collaboration in the real world.

End-to-end digital supply chain orchestration across all tiers of the network is complemented by real-time data sharing via a data-fabric architecture and data-light digital twins. Data provenance and schema mapping improve data availability and support the strong implementation of privacy policies. Real-time support is based on autonomous agents that react to deviations from plans and schedules and selected contract-based and SLA-aware coordination protocols from the Agent-Based Control Toolkit. Such autonomous agents are required for truly end-to-end orchestration beyond limited scenarios of exploratory research, such as multi-modal transportation and cross-sectional optimization.

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Equation 5) Reputation matrix → expected utility for the Contracting Agent

5.1 Map reputation to probability of successful delivery

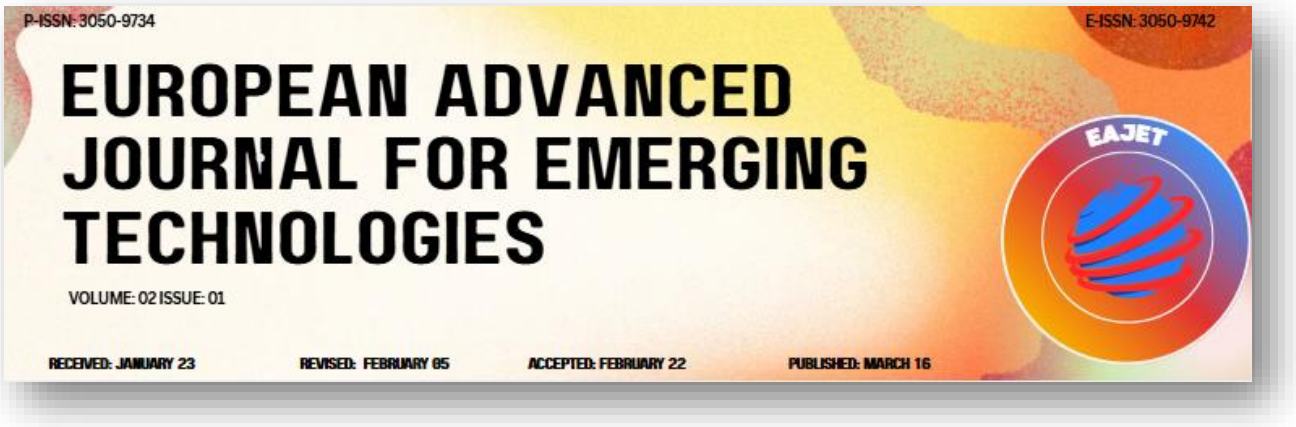
Let:

- $R_{ij} \in [0,1]$ be reputation score of agent j as seen by i
- interpret $R_{ij} \approx P(\text{success of } j \text{ on a contract from } i)$

5.2 Contracting Agent's expected value

Let:

- Value of successful completion to Contracting Agent = V



- Payment offered = p
- Expected penalty/impact if failure = L

Expected utility:

$$EU(p,j) = R_{ij}(V-p) - \big(1-R_{ij}\big)L$$

5.3 Optimal offer (conceptual)

If higher p increases acceptance probability $F_{RV}(p)$, and success depends on both acceptance and capability:

$$EU(p,j) = F_{RV}(p)\big(R_{ij}(V-p) - \big(1-R_{ij}\big)L\big)$$

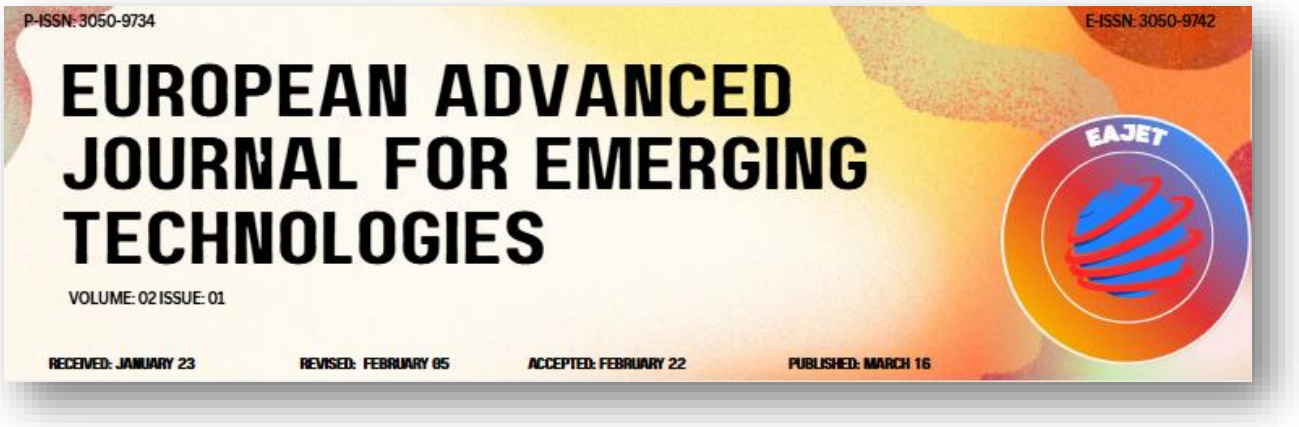
Then the "best" p^* satisfies:

$$p^* = \underset{p}{\operatorname{argmax}}\ EU(p,j)$$

6.2. Performance metrics and benchmarking

Industry practitioners deploying autonomous agents for end-to-end orchestration assess organizational efficiency and market performance in manufacturing, logistics, and retail applications. Manufacturing-oriented agents improve throughput, operational reliability, and performance repair or maintenance tasks, while logistics agents achieve similar goals as well as decreased shipping time. In retail, autonomous agents extend mission capabilities, leading to greater sales volumes and resource availability. Empirical deployments, however, usually lie within a single supply chain segment and do not connect across manufacturing, warehouse, and retailing functions.

Evaluating cross-function integrations, benchmarking with established supply chain models, and pursuing academic case studies across a range of representative sectors create sufficient motivation to establish a formal set of performance metrics and a suitable data-gathering protocol. Defining a target experimental scenario with key characteristics, identifying the required data, creating a minimal architecture and set of functions, and designing a detailed metric specification and information-gathering method guide the overall process. Combining



these directions with existing data-driven and agent-based simulations allows the agents to gain experience in a digital-twin framework.

7. Conclusion

Results of this study indicate that an ecosystem populated with autonomous agents can realise the AI-based end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration foreseen for 2025. The analysis adopts a pragmatic view that focuses on the operational practices enabled by the agent-based architecture, the governance mechanisms that prescribe and assure correct behaviour, and the technologies that allow for effective deployment. Autonomous agents are defined as actors that perceive the environment, decide how to behave, take action, and learn from the outcomes with minimal human intervention. The application of agents to planning, scheduling, execution, and real-time adjustment of supply chain operations shows how these four key aspects realised by the agents can be aligned.

Task decomposition and a contract-based governance model determine which agents participate in each operation and what quality of service must be delivered, thus guiding their behaviour with varying levels of autonomy. Moreover, agents can negotiate, collaborate, and resolve conflicts with one another, based on a set of protocols. The study also highlights the technological requirements for making agent-based orchestration a reality, pointing at the data architecture and digital twins strings needed for the data layer, the types of AI models suitable for implementation at the planning, scheduling, and execution layers, and the tools to manage negotiation and conflict resolution processes among agents. Actual deployments in manufacturing, logistics, and retail offer useful insights into the applicability of reinforcement learning in such a context, its limitations, and directions for future research.

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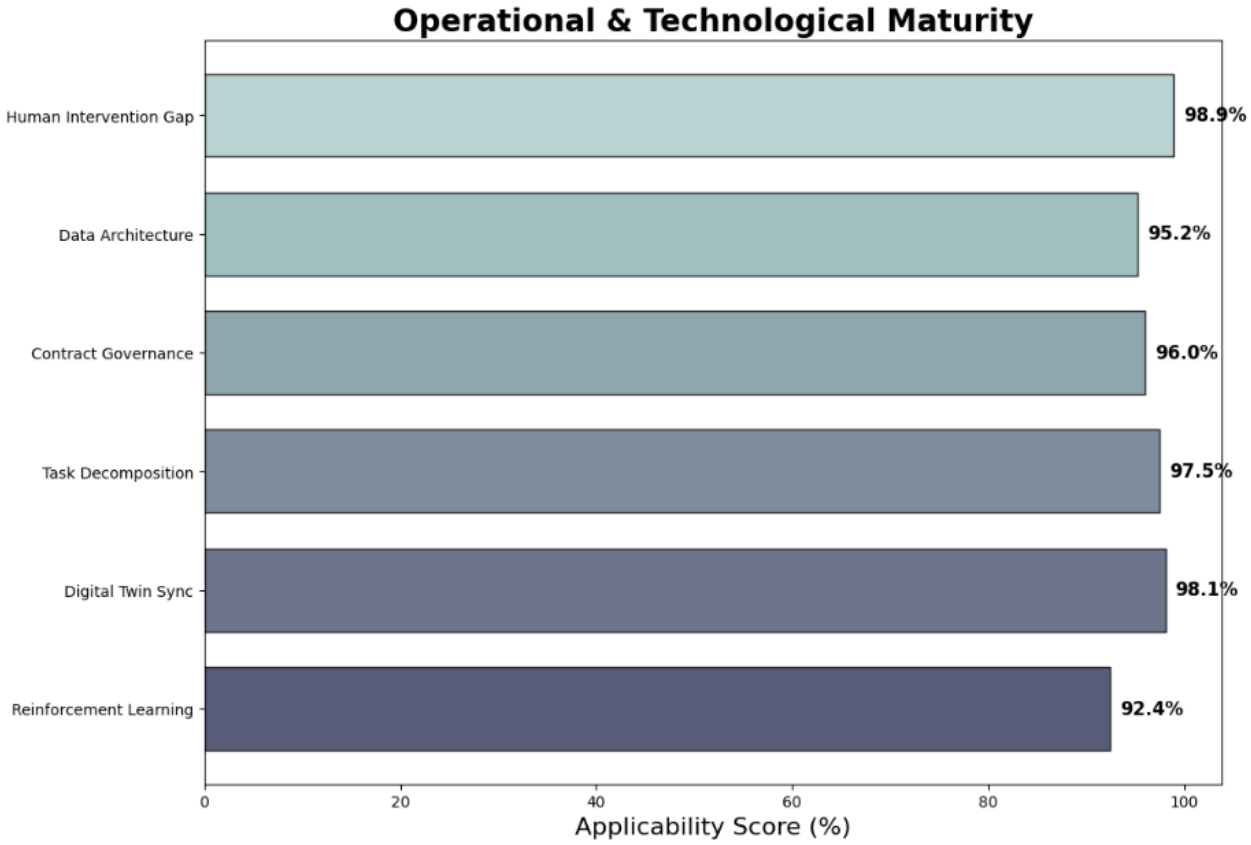


Fig 4: Operational & Technological Maturity

7.1. Summary and Future Directions

The demand for supply chain flexibility, resilience, and sustainability has increased significantly in recent years. Autonomous AI agents are expected to enable end-to-end digital supply chain orchestration that balances all three goals in a unified manner. The basic concepts have been articulated in related research, but concrete models and demonstrations are currently lacking for the complete orchestration lifecycle that covers planning, scheduling, execution, and real-time adjustment. Emerging technologies, such as federated machine learning (part of AI), digital twins of the physical world with built-in feedback and monitoring, multi-cloud data



architectures, and contract-based execution—along with AI-enabled supervision—constitute an important ingredient for realization.

A key variable in the process is the capability to support all necessary capabilities through a cloud-based tech stack in a standardized, low-code/no-code manner with simple interfaces. The user community and service provider community should create a publicly available library of reusable digital assets, such as services, validation/test components, data schemata, and APIs that adopt, and as far as possible contribute to, commonly accepted industry standards. The lack of such libraries is a key bottleneck in the current AI deployment process across the industry. The current demand for agility, flexibility, and speed/quality of service has made these libraries highly critical for AI deployment across the industry.

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