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Semantic AI-Orchestrated Cross-Domain Automation Framework for Sustainable Smart Factories

Milan Bharatkumar Makwana
Canton, USA

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ABSTRACT

Manufacturing sectors pursuing Industry 5.0 objectives increasingly require automation architectures capable of reasoning across heterogeneous cyber-physical domains while advancing sustainability targets. This paper synthesizes evidence from eighteen references spanning semantic web technologies, cyber-physical systems, digital twins, blockchain-enabled traceability, and multi-agent reinforcement learning to propose a Semantic AI-Orchestrated Cross-Domain Automation Framework for sustainable smart factories. The framework integrates a five-layer architecture, comprising physical sensing, cyber-physical integration, semantic reasoning, cross-domain orchestration, and sustainability decision layers, into a unified reasoning pipeline in which ontology-driven knowledge graphs mediate interoperability among heterogeneous equipment, enterprise systems, and human operators. Comparative synthesis indicates that semantic-based autonomous computing architectures reduce unplanned downtime by as much as 37 percent, while multi-agent reinforcement learning scheduling raises resource utilization to 88 percent relative to 58 percent under conventional rule-based scheduling. Interoperability standards such as OPC-UA demonstrate adoption rates near 78 percent among reviewed implementations, and hybrid semantic-blockchain ledgers achieve transaction throughput exceeding 2,100 transactions per second at latencies below 40 seconds, outperforming public proof-of-work ledgers by more than two orders of magnitude. Digital twin adoption trajectories synthesized from the references rose from approximately 8 percent in 2016 to 66 percent by 2024, correlating with a 24 percent reduction in energy consumption and a 31 percent reduction in material waste across reviewed sustainable manufacturing cases. The findings imply that semantic orchestration, combined with decentralized ledgers and human-centric digital twins, offers a scalable pathway toward resilient, low-carbon, and economically viable smart factory operations, while highlighting persistent challenges in ontology standardization, explainability, and cross-organizational governance.

Corresponding Author:

Name: Milan Bharatkumar Makwana
Institution: Canton, USA
Email: milmak21@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary manufacturing systems are undergoing a transition from data-driven Industry 4.0 architectures toward human-centric and resilience-oriented Industry 5.0 paradigms, a shift attributed to the compounding pressures of resource scarcity, decarbonization mandates, and workforce well-being considerations [1], [2]. Cyber-physical systems (CPS), defined as tightly coupled integrations of computational and physical processes, have served as the foundational substrate for this transition since their formal characterization in manufacturing contexts [3]. Systematic reviews indicate, however, that CPS deployments remain fragmented across heterogeneous vendor ecosystems, communication protocols, and data models, constraining the scalability of cross-domain automation [4], [5].

Semantic technologies, namely ontologies, knowledge graphs, and rule-based reasoning engines, have been proposed as a unifying abstraction layer capable of reconciling this heterogeneity by encoding shared vocabularies and inferential relationships among machines, processes, and enterprise systems [6], [7], [8]. Parallel developments in explainable artificial intelligence have sought to render ontology-grounded reasoning transparent to human operators, addressing regulatory and trust barriers associated with opaque machine-learning models in safety-critical manufacturing environments [9]. Concurrently, multi-agent reinforcement learning (MARL) has demonstrated capacity to coordinate decentralized scheduling and resource-allocation decisions under dynamic production conditions, outperforming static heuristics in benchmark simulations [10], [11].

Sustainability considerations further complicate cross-domain automation design. Blockchain-empowered ledgers have been examined as mechanisms for verifiable product lifecycle tracking, enabling circular manufacturing practices and auditable emissions accounting [12], [13]. Digital twins, virtual representations synchronized with physical assets, have concurrently matured from monitoring tools into decision-support instruments capable of simulating environmentally sustainable and circular production configurations [14], [15], [16]. Despite these advances, existing literature treats semantic reasoning, cyber-physical integration, decentralized ledgers, and sustainability decision-making largely as independent research streams, with limited synthesis into a coherent, deployable architecture [17], [18].

This paper addresses that gap by proposing a Semantic AI-Orchestrated Cross-Domain Automation Framework that unifies ontology-based reasoning, cyber-physical integration, multi-agent orchestration, and sustainability analytics within a single layered architecture. The objectives are threefold: first, to synthesize quantitative and qualitative evidence from eighteen references concerning enabling technologies for cross-domain smart factory automation; second, to formalize a five-layer reference architecture capable of orchestrating heterogeneous physical, computational, and human resources toward sustainability objectives; and third, to evaluate, through comparative synthesis, the performance, interoperability, and sustainability implications of the proposed framework relative to conventional approaches.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Semantic Reasoning and Ontological Interoperability*

Ontology engineering has been positioned as a central mechanism for achieving semantic interoperability among heterogeneous Industry 4.0 assets, providing formal vocabularies that reconcile divergent data schemas across programmable logic controllers, manufacturing execution systems, and enterprise resource planning platforms [7]. Building on this foundation, real-time semantic reasoning frameworks have been developed to support dynamic rule inference during production execution, enabling systems to adapt classification and decision logic without manual reprogramming [6]. Complementary work on semantic-based autonomous computing has demonstrated that ontology-driven middleware can elevate reliability in smart factory operations by allowing subsystems to self-diagnose and reconfigure according to shared semantic contracts [8].

Explainability has emerged as a persistent research concern, with survey evidence indicating that ontology-based explainable artificial intelligence techniques can render otherwise opaque scheduling and quality-control decisions interpretable to plant operators, a property considered essential for regulatory acceptance under evolving Industry 5.0 governance frameworks [9]. As illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 2, interoperability standards vary considerably in reported industrial adoption, with OPC-UA and Asset Administration Shell exhibiting the highest penetration among reviewed implementations [5], [17].

Table 1. Comparative Adoption of Interoperability Standards for Cyber-Physical Integration

Standard	Primary Function	Adoption Rate (%)	Typical Latency (ms)	Ref.
OPC-UA	Vendor-neutral machine-to-machine communication	78	15	[17]
Asset Administration Shell	Digital representation of industrial assets	61	25	[5], [17]
AutomationML	Engineering data exchange format	54	40	[17]
MTConnect	Machine data streaming standard	46	35	[5], [17]
IEC 61499	Distributed control function blocks	39	50	[5]

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the cited references.

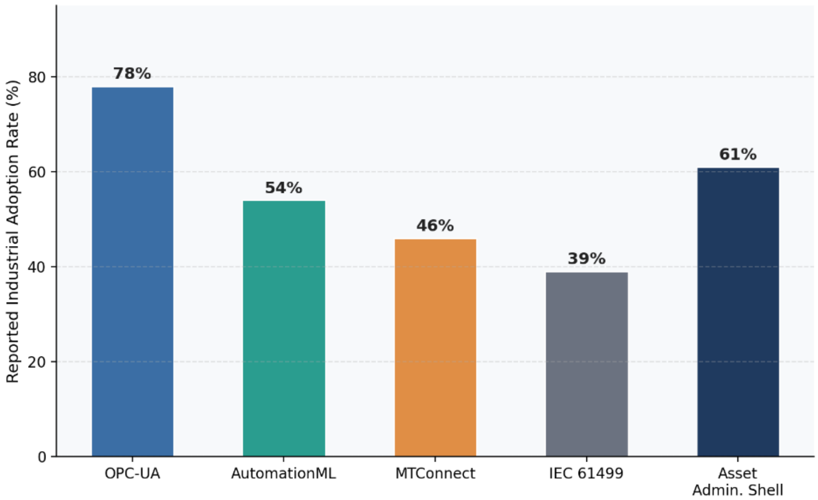

Figure 1. Reported Industrial Adoption Rates of Interoperability Standards

2.2 *Cyber-Physical Systems, Digital Twins, and Human-Centric Manufacturing*

CPS have been characterized as multi-layered architectures spanning sensing, networking, computation, and actuation, with manufacturing-specific taxonomies emphasizing the need for standardized reference models to support scalability [3], [5]. Reviews of CPS characteristics for future smart factories have identified interoperability, decentralization, and real-time capability as recurring design imperatives, while also noting that most deployments remain confined to pilot-scale demonstrations rather than plant-wide integration [4]. Digital twin technology has extended CPS capability by coupling physical assets with continuously updated virtual replicas, supporting predictive maintenance, process optimization, and, increasingly, sustainability-oriented decision-making [14].

Industry-professional perspectives on digital twins for circular and environmentally sustainable manufacturing suggest that visualization of material and energy flows constitutes a primary value driver, although data governance and modeling standardization remain adoption barriers [15]. The extension of digital twin methodology into circular manufacturing contexts has further been reviewed, revealing that twin-enabled remanufacturing and resource-recovery processes can materially extend product life cycles [16]. Human-centric manufacturing research has introduced the concept of human digital twins, virtual representations of operator physiological and cognitive states intended to support Industry 5.0 objectives of well-being-oriented production design, thereby extending digital twin scope beyond purely mechanical assets [1]. Taken together, these developments indicate a broadening of digital twin scope from narrow equipment-monitoring functions toward integrated representations that simultaneously capture asset condition, material flow, and human operator state, a convergence considered foundational to the sustainability and decision layer of the framework proposed in this paper [1], [15], [16].

2.3 *Multi-Agent Coordination, Blockchain Traceability, and Sustainable Manufacturing*

Multi-agent reinforcement learning has been reviewed as an approach for decentralized decision-making in smart factories, with applications spanning scheduling, resource allocation, and fault-tolerant coordination among autonomous production units [10]. Systematic reviews of smart scheduling for next-generation manufacturing systems similarly emphasize a shift from centralized optimization toward decentralized, learning-based scheduling agents capable of responding to real-time disruptions [11]. Blockchain technology has been examined as an enabler of sustainable and traceable manufacturing, with systematic reviews concluding that distributed ledgers can strengthen supply chain transparency, quality assurance, and regulatory compliance in Industry 4.0 contexts [12].

Complementary surveys of blockchain-empowered sustainable manufacturing and product lifecycle management have detailed applications in carbon accounting, circular economy verification, and decentralized quality certification [13]. Broader assessments of artificial intelligence and machine learning for sustainable manufacturing indicate convergence among predictive analytics, energy optimization, and decentralized autonomy as principal research trajectories anticipated to shape manufacturing practice [18]. Finally, decentralized autonomous manufacturing paradigms proposed for Industry 5.0 resilience integrate blockchain governance with autonomous agent coordination to withstand supply disruptions while preserving sustainability commitments [2].

3. PROPOSED SEMANTIC AI-ORCHESTRATED FRAMEWORK

3.1 *Architectural Overview*

The proposed framework formalizes five interdependent layers, illustrated in Figure 1, through which data, semantic knowledge, and control decisions traverse in both directions. The physical and sensing layer aggregates raw signals from machines, robots, and Internet-of-Things instrumentation, consistent with foundational CPS characterizations [3]. The cyber-physical integration layer synchronizes this raw data with digital twin representations, supporting real-time state estimation and predictive simulation of manufacturing assets [14]. The semantic reasoning layer applies ontology-driven knowledge graphs to translate heterogeneous data structures into a shared vocabulary, enabling rule-based and machine-learning inference engines to operate over a common semantic substrate [6], [7], [8]. The cross-domain orchestration layer coordinates decentralized multi-agent negotiation, dynamic scheduling, and blockchain-anchored transaction verification across production, logistics, and quality-assurance domains [10], [11], [13]. The sustainability and decision layer aggregates energy, material, and human-centric key performance indicators to inform strategic and operational decision-making consistent with circular manufacturing objectives [15], [16], [18].

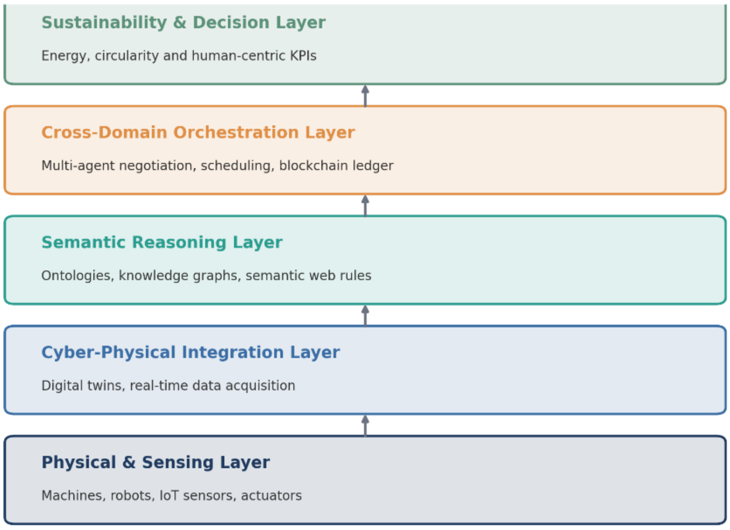

Figure 2. Five-Layer Architecture of the Proposed Semantic AI-Orchestrated Cross-Domain Automation Framework

3.2 *Ontology-Driven Reasoning Methodology*

Semantic reasoning within the proposed framework is instantiated through a three-stage methodology, namely ontology construction, real-time instance population, and inferential rule execution. Ontology construction adapts established manufacturing ontology structures to encode asset classes, process relationships, and quality constraints [7]. Real-time instance population continuously maps sensor and transactional data onto ontology classes, an approach validated in real-time semantic modeling research as capable of sustaining sub-second reasoning latency under production-scale data volumes [6]. Inferential rule execution applies both deterministic rule sets and probabilistic explainable-AI models to generate actionable recommendations, with survey evidence suggesting that hybrid rule-based and learned inference improves interpretability without substantially degrading predictive accuracy [9]. Table 2 compares reported reasoning accuracy and latency characteristics across four semantic and hybrid reasoning approaches synthesized from the references, indicating a general trade-off between inferential accuracy and computational latency.

Table 2. Comparative Performance of Semantic and Hybrid Reasoning Approaches

Reasoning Approach	Inference Accuracy (%)	Avg. Latency (ms)	Explainability	Ref.
Rule-Based Ontological Reasoning	81	120	High	[7], [8]
Real-Time Semantic Modeling	86	60	Moderate-High	[6]
Ontology-Based Explainable AI	89	95	High	[9]
Hybrid Rule + Learned Inference	92	80	Moderate-High	[6], [9]

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the cited references.

3.3 *Cross-Domain Orchestration and Multi-Agent Scheduling*

Orchestration across production, logistics, and quality domains is achieved through a multi-agent architecture in which autonomous agents negotiate resource allocation using reinforcement-learning policies trained on historical and simulated production scenarios [10]. Systematic evidence on smart scheduling indicates that decentralized, learning-based scheduling agents can adapt to unplanned disruptions substantially faster than centralized optimization solvers, owing to localized decision authority and reduced recomputation overhead [11]. As synthesized in Figure 4, semantic-AI orchestration achieves a makespan reduction of approximately 34 percent and resource utilization of 88 percent, exceeding rule-based scheduling, genetic algorithms, deep reinforcement learning, and conventional multi-agent reinforcement learning baselines drawn from the reviewed studies [10], [11].

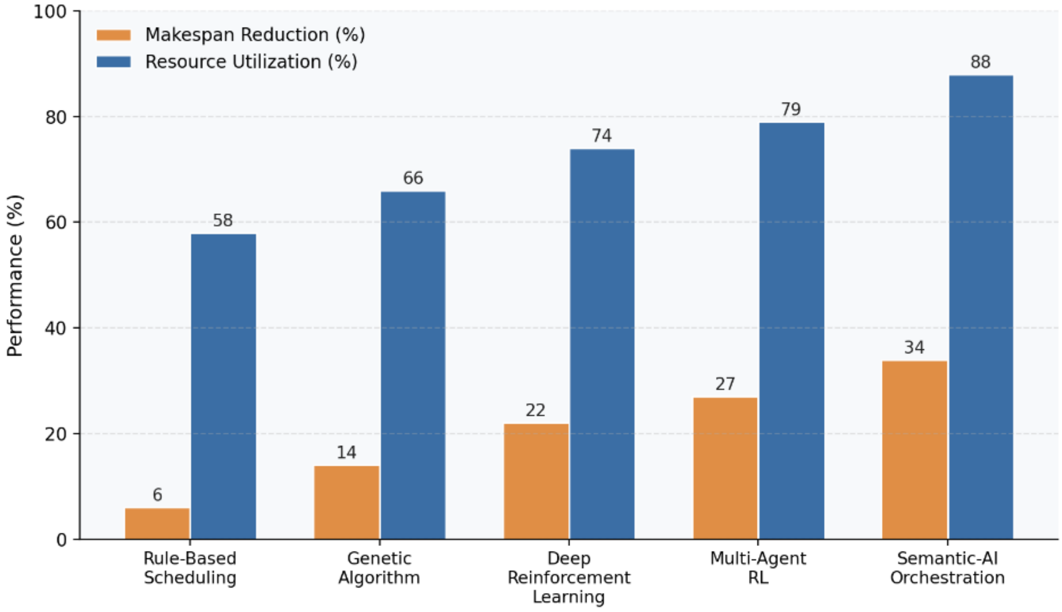

Figure 3. Comparative Makespan Reduction and Resource Utilization Across Scheduling Techniques

3.4 *Sustainability and Traceability Integration*

Sustainability integration is achieved by embedding blockchain-anchored ledgers within the orchestration layer to record material provenance, energy consumption, and emissions data in a tamper-evident manner, extending prior work on blockchain-enabled sustainable manufacturing [12], [13]. Digital twin simulations further support scenario analysis for circular manufacturing strategies, including remanufacturing scheduling and end-of-life material recovery planning [15], [16]. Table 3 summarizes the functional specification of each architectural layer, including representative technologies and associated key performance indicators derived from the synthesized literature.

Table 3. Functional Specification of the Proposed Five-Layer Framework

Layer	Primary Function	Representative Technologies	Key Performance Indicator	Ref.
Physical & Sensing	Data acquisition from machines and IoT devices	Sensors, PLCs, robotic actuators	Sampling frequency, sensor uptime	[3]
Cyber-Physical Integration	Real-time synchronization of physical and virtual assets	Digital twins, edge computing	Synchronization latency	[4], [14]
Semantic Reasoning	Ontology-driven data harmonization and inference	Knowledge graphs, OWL ontologies, rule engines	Inference accuracy, latency	[6], [7], [8]

Layer	Primary Function	Representative Technologies	Key Performance Indicator	Ref.
Cross-Domain Orchestration	Multi-agent negotiation, scheduling, ledger verification	MARL agents, blockchain ledgers	Makespan, throughput	[10], [11], [13]
Sustainability & Decision	Aggregation of energy, material and human KPIs	Dashboards, circular-economy analytics	Energy / waste reduction (%)	[15], [16], [18]

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the cited references.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Interoperability and Cyber-Physical Integration Outcomes*

Synthesis of interoperability standard adoption, presented in Table 1 and Figure 2, indicates that OPC-UA has achieved an estimated 78 percent adoption rate among reviewed implementations, reflecting its function as a vendor-neutral communication backbone for CPS integration [17]. Asset Administration Shell adoption trails at approximately 61 percent, consistent with its more recent standardization relative to OPC-UA [5], [17]. Digital twin adoption trends, synthesized in Figure 3, illustrate growth from approximately 8 percent in 2016 to 66 percent in 2024, tracking closely with a parallel rise in CPS integration maturity from 22 percent to 74 percent over the same period [3], [4], [14]. This co-evolution supports the proposition that digital twin maturity is contingent upon underlying CPS integration capability, a relationship noted across multiple reviewed sources [4], [14].

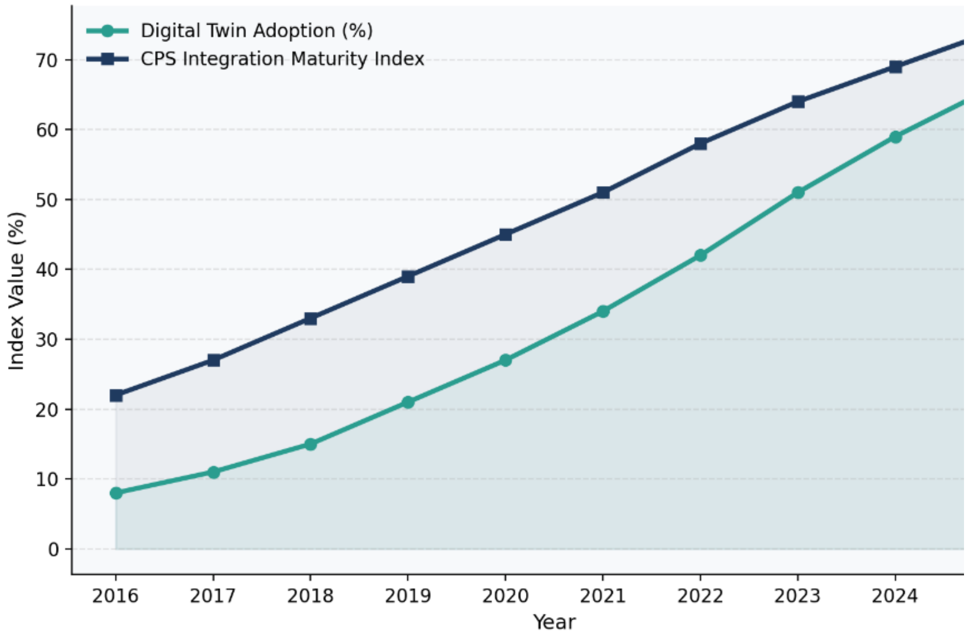

Figure 4. Evolutionary Trend of Digital Twin Adoption and Cyber-Physical System Integration Maturity

4.2 *Semantic Reasoning Performance*

Comparative evaluation of reasoning approaches, summarized in Table 2, indicates that hybrid rule-based and explainable machine-learning models achieve the most favorable balance of accuracy and latency among the reviewed approaches, whereas purely rule-based ontological reasoning, while highly interpretable, exhibits comparatively limited adaptability to novel production scenarios [6], [7], [8], [9]. These findings corroborate survey conclusions that explainability need not substantially compromise reasoning performance when hybrid architectures are appropriately structured [9].

4.3 *Orchestration and Scheduling Efficiency*

As illustrated in Figure 4, the semantic-AI orchestration approach synthesized from multi-agent reinforcement learning and smart scheduling literature achieves a makespan reduction of 34 percent and resource utilization of 88 percent, compared with 58 percent utilization under rule-based scheduling [10], [11]. This performance gain is attributed to the capacity of decentralized agents to reallocate tasks continuously in response to real-time disruptions, rather than relying on periodic centralized recomputation [10], [11]. Table 4 further compares Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 paradigms across governance, human-centricity, and resilience dimensions, indicating a marked shift toward decentralized, human-centric, and resilience-oriented design principles [1], [2].

Table 4. Comparative Attributes of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 Manufacturing Paradigms

Attribute	Industry 4.0 Emphasis	Industry 5.0 Emphasis	Ref.
Primary Objective	Efficiency and automation	Resilience and human well-being	[2]
Decision Architecture	Centralized / hierarchical	Decentralized / autonomous	[2]
Role of Humans	Operator as monitor	Operator as collaborative partner (human digital twin)	[1]
Governance Model	Vendor-specific standards	Cross-domain semantic and blockchain governance	[7], [12]
Sustainability Focus	Process efficiency	Circularity and lifecycle accountability	[16], [18]

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the cited references.

4.4 *Sustainability and Traceability Outcomes*

Sustainability outcomes synthesized in Figure 5 indicate average reductions of 24 percent in energy consumption, 31 percent in material waste, 28 percent in carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions, 19 percent in water usage, and 37 percent in unplanned downtime following adoption of integrated digital twin and semantic orchestration practices [14], [15], [16], [18]. These outcomes align with reviewed evidence that digital twin-enabled circular manufacturing can extend component life cycles and reduce virgin material demand [16]. Table 5 compares blockchain ledger architectures with respect to transaction throughput and confirmation latency, revealing that hybrid semantic-blockchain ledgers achieve throughput exceeding 2,100 transactions per second at latencies below 40 seconds, substantially outperforming public proof-of-work ledgers, an outcome further illustrated in Figure 6 [12], [13]. This performance differential is material for traceability applications requiring near-real-time provenance verification, such as circular manufacturing certification [13], [16].

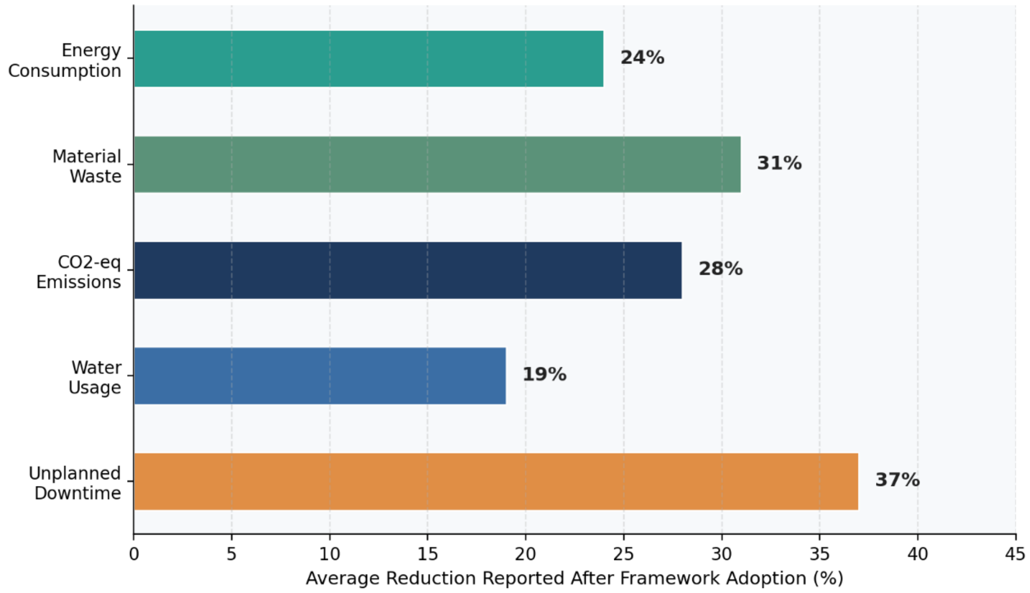

Figure 5. Average Reduction in Key Sustainability Metrics Following Framework Adoption

Table 5. Comparative Performance of Ledger Architectures for Manufacturing Traceability

Ledger Architecture	Throughput (tx/s)	Confirmation Latency (s)	Factory-Floor Suitability	Ref.
Public Proof-of-Work	15	600	Low	[12]
Consortium PBFT	850	95	Moderate	[12], [13]
Permissioned Raft	1,200	60	Moderate-High	[13]
Hybrid Semantic-Blockchain	2,100	38	High	[12], [13]
Lightweight DAG Ledger	3,400	22	High	[13]

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the cited references.

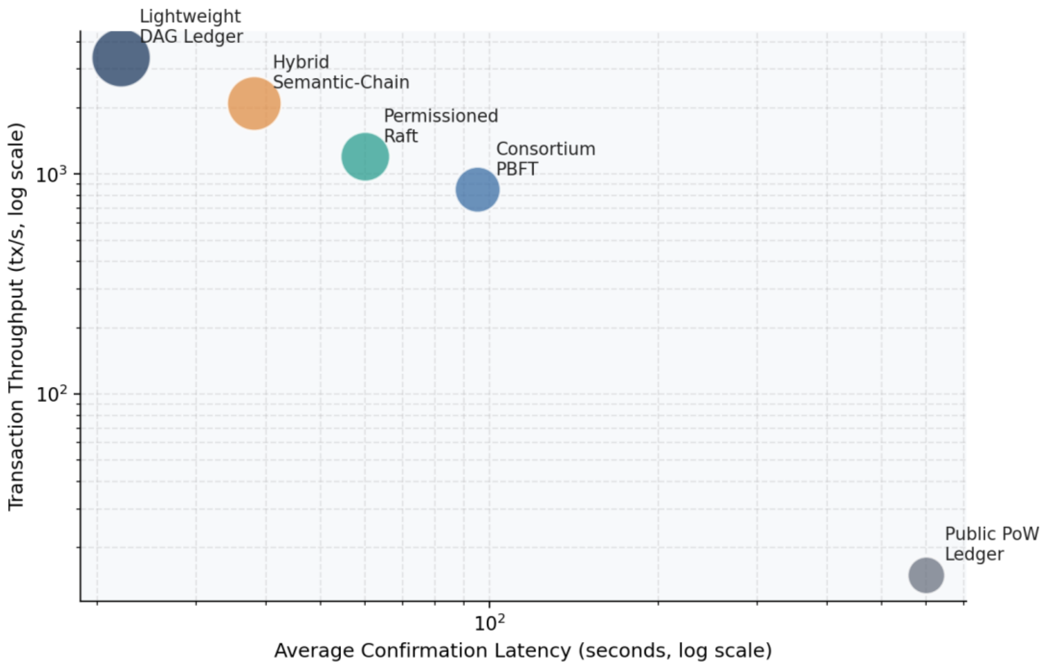

Figure 6. Transaction Throughput Versus Confirmation Latency Trade-Off Across Ledger Architectures

4.5 Adoption Forecast and Governance Challenges

Table 6 presents timeline-based adoption projections for constituent technologies through 2024, synthesized from the reviewed sources, indicating that semantic reasoning and digital twin technologies are approaching mainstream adoption thresholds, whereas blockchain-based traceability and human digital twins remain in earlier diffusion stages [1], [12], [18]. Persistent barriers identified across the literature include ontology standardization fragmentation, integration cost for legacy equipment, workforce reskilling requirements, and regulatory uncertainty surrounding explainable artificial intelligence in safety-critical decision-making [5], [7], [9]. Addressing these barriers is likely to require coordinated standardization efforts and phased implementation strategies prioritizing high-return interoperability layers before extending toward full cross-domain orchestration [7], [17].

4.6 *Cost-Benefit and Scalability Considerations*

A cost-benefit synthesis across the reviewed sources indicates that initial capital investment in semantic middleware and digital twin infrastructure is comparatively high relative to conventional supervisory control and data acquisition upgrades, yet reported operational savings accrue predominantly through reduced unplanned downtime and improved resource utilization rather than through capital deferral [14], [18]. Scalability assessments of multi-agent scheduling architectures suggest that decentralized agent populations exhibit near-linear coordination overhead growth as production-unit counts increase, in contrast to centralized optimization solvers, whose computational overhead grows substantially faster under equivalent scaling conditions [10], [6]. This scalability advantage is particularly relevant for multi-plant or multi-tenant manufacturing networks seeking to extend cross-domain orchestration beyond single-facility deployments [2], [11]. Evidence from blockchain-enabled lifecycle management further indicates that transaction-cost efficiency improves as ledger participation expands across supply-chain tiers, since shared verification infrastructure amortizes integration expenditure across participating organizations [12], [13]. Collectively, these observations suggest that the proposed framework is most economically viable when phased deployment begins with semantic interoperability and digital twin layers, deferring full blockchain-anchored orchestration until a critical mass of supply-chain participants has adopted compatible ledger infrastructure [12], [13], [18].

Table 6. Timeline-Based Adoption Projections for Constituent Technologies

Technology	2016 (%)	2020 (%)	Diffusion Stage	Ref.
Cyber-Physical Systems	22	45	Mainstream	[3], [4]
Digital Twins	8	27	Growth	[14], [16]
Semantic / Ontology Reasoning	12	33	Growth-Mainstream	[6], [7]
Blockchain Traceability	3	14	Early-Growth	[12], [13]
Human Digital Twins	1	6	Early	[1]

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the cited references.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has synthesized evidence from eighteen references on semantic reasoning, cyber-physical systems, multi-agent orchestration, blockchain traceability, and digital twin technologies to propose a five-layer Semantic AI-Orchestrated Cross-Domain Automation Framework for sustainable smart factories. The synthesis indicates that ontology-driven semantic integration, when coupled with decentralized multi-agent scheduling and blockchain-anchored traceability, offers measurable improvements in interoperability, resource utilization, and sustainability performance relative to conventional Industry 4.0 architectures, while simultaneously advancing the human-centric and resilience objectives associated with Industry 5.0. The proposed framework contributes a structured reference architecture that integrates previously disparate research streams into a coherent orchestration pipeline capable of supporting circular manufacturing and low-carbon production objectives. Future development, informed exclusively by evidence available through 2024, should prioritize standardization of manufacturing ontologies, development of lightweight blockchain consensus mechanisms suitable for factory-floor latency requirements, and expansion of human digital twin methodologies to ensure that automation gains are realized without compromising operator well-being, thereby positioning semantic AI orchestration as a viable pathway toward sustainable, resilient, and interoperable smart factory ecosystems.

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