

Advanced Computing for Sustainable Development: Exploring the Convergence of AI, Quantum Technologies and Energy-Efficient Computing

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, cloud computing, high-performance computing, and data-intensive digital services has created new opportunities for economic and social development while simultaneously increasing computational energy consumption and environmental pressure. Sustainable development therefore requires computing paradigms that improve computational capabilities while reducing energy use, material consumption, and carbon emissions. This paper examines the convergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum technologies, and energy-efficient computing as an emerging pathway for sustainable digital transformation. A qualitative and conceptual research methodology based on secondary literature is employed to analyse developments in AI accelerators, neuromorphic computing, edge computing, green data centres, quantum computing, quantum machine learning, and renewable-energy-powered computational infrastructure. The study proposes an integrated framework in which AI provides intelligent optimisation, quantum technologies address selected computationally complex problems, and energy-efficient architectures reduce the environmental cost of computation. Potential applications include climate modelling, renewable-energy optimisation, smart grids, sustainable transportation, drug discovery, materials science, environmental monitoring, and resource optimisation. However, challenges involving quantum hardware maturity, algorithmic efficiency, hardware manufacturing, cooling requirements, electronic waste, data-centre energy demand, cybersecurity, skills shortages, and unequal technological access remain significant. The paper argues that sustainable advanced computing should not be evaluated solely according to computational performance. Instead, future systems should be assessed through a broader framework incorporating energy efficiency, carbon intensity, lifecycle impacts, resource utilisation, scalability, accessibility, and societal value. The convergence of AI, quantum technologies, and energy-efficient computing could become an important foundation for

sustainable digital infrastructure when technological innovation is aligned with responsible governance and environmental objectives.

Keywords: Advanced Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Computing, Energy-Efficient Computing, Sustainable Development, Green Computing, Neuromorphic Computing, Edge Computing, Green Data Centres, Sustainable Digital Transformation.

1. Introduction

Computing has become a fundamental infrastructure for modern society.

Artificial intelligence, cloud platforms, high-performance computing, digital twins, autonomous systems, and data analytics increasingly support:

- Healthcare.
- Education.
- Scientific research.
- Manufacturing.
- Agriculture.
- Energy systems.
- Transportation.
- Public administration.

However, the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure creates a sustainability challenge.

Large-scale computing requires significant:

- Electricity.
- Cooling.
- Hardware.
- Semiconductor materials.
- Data-storage capacity.
- Network infrastructure.

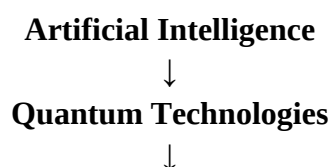
The challenge is therefore no longer simply:

How can computers become more powerful?

It is increasingly:

How can computational capabilities grow while reducing environmental and resource costs?

Three technological directions are particularly relevant:



Energy-Efficient Computing

Their convergence could create a new generation of computational infrastructure designed around both performance and sustainability.

2. Concept of Advanced Computing for Sustainable Development

Advanced computing for sustainable development refers to the use of emerging computational technologies to address environmental, economic, and social challenges while minimising the resource requirements of computation itself.

The concept can be represented as:

Computational Intelligence + Computational Efficiency + Sustainable Infrastructure = Sustainable Advanced Computing

The approach has two complementary dimensions.

Computing for Sustainability

Using advanced computing to solve sustainability problems.

Examples include:

- Climate modelling.
- Renewable-energy forecasting.
- Smart-grid optimisation.
- Environmental monitoring.

Sustainable Computing

Reducing the environmental footprint of computing infrastructure itself.

Examples include:

- Energy-efficient processors.
- Efficient algorithms.
- Renewable-powered data centres.
- Low-power edge devices.

Both dimensions are necessary.

3. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the role of AI in sustainable computing.
2. Analyse the potential contribution of quantum technologies.
3. Explore energy-efficient computing architectures.
4. Examine the relationship between AI and quantum computing.
5. Analyse emerging applications in sustainable development.
6. Identify technological and environmental challenges.

7. Develop an integrated framework for sustainable advanced computing.

4. Research Methodology

The paper adopts a qualitative, conceptual, and descriptive research methodology based on secondary literature.

Research concerning AI, quantum computing, green computing, semiconductor technologies, high-performance computing, data centres, and sustainable digital infrastructure is conceptually reviewed.

The analysis focuses on four major areas:

1. AI-enabled computational optimisation.
2. Quantum computing and quantum algorithms.
3. Energy-efficient computing architectures.
4. Sustainability-oriented applications.

5. Evolution of Computing

Computing has undergone several major technological transitions.

First Generation

Vacuum-tube computers.

Second Generation

Transistor-based systems.

Third Generation

Integrated circuits.

Fourth Generation

Microprocessors and personal computing.

Fifth Generation

Cloud, distributed, mobile, and AI computing.

Emerging Generation

AI accelerators, quantum processors, neuromorphic architectures, edge intelligence, and heterogeneous computing.

The objective is increasingly shifting from simply increasing processing capacity towards optimising computation under energy and resource constraints.

6. Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Computing

AI has two contrasting effects on sustainability.

On one hand, AI can optimise systems and reduce resource consumption.

For example, AI can optimise:

- Energy grids.
- Transportation routes.
- Building systems.
- Industrial processes.
- Agricultural irrigation.

On the other hand, training and deploying large AI models can require substantial computational resources.

Therefore:

AI for Sustainability must be combined with Sustainable AI.

7. Sustainable AI

Sustainable AI involves designing AI systems that minimise computational and environmental costs while maintaining acceptable performance.

Potential strategies include:

- Model compression.
- Quantisation.
- Knowledge distillation.
- Efficient architectures.
- Sparse computation.
- Hardware acceleration.
- Edge inference.

The goal is not necessarily to maximise model size but to maximise:

Useful Intelligence per Unit of Energy.

8. AI Hardware Accelerators

Traditional CPUs are not always optimal for AI workloads.

Modern AI systems increasingly use specialised processors such as:

- GPUs.
- TPUs.
- NPUs.
- AI accelerators.

These architectures can perform parallel operations more efficiently.

Energy efficiency can be improved by matching the hardware architecture to the computational workload.

9. Edge AI

Cloud-based AI can require large amounts of data transmission.

Edge AI moves computation closer to the data source.

Examples include:

- Smart sensors.
- Autonomous vehicles.
- Industrial equipment.
- Smart buildings.
- Environmental monitoring devices.

Benefits may include:

- Lower communication requirements.
- Reduced latency.
- Improved privacy.
- Lower dependence on centralised data centres.

10. Neuromorphic Computing

Neuromorphic computing attempts to emulate certain principles of biological neural systems.

Unlike conventional architectures, neuromorphic systems can use:

- Event-driven computation.
- Spiking neural networks.
- Highly parallel processing.

This can potentially reduce energy consumption for suitable workloads.

Potential applications include:

- Robotics.
- Sensor processing.
- Autonomous systems.
- Real-time environmental monitoring.

11. Quantum Computing

Quantum computing uses quantum-mechanical phenomena to process information.

Quantum systems operate using:

- Qubits.
- Superposition.
- Entanglement.
- Quantum interference.

Quantum computers are not simply faster replacements for conventional computers.

Their potential advantage lies in solving certain classes of problems using fundamentally different computational approaches.

12. Quantum Computing and Sustainability

Quantum computing could contribute to sustainable development indirectly by addressing computationally difficult problems.

Potential applications include:

- Molecular simulation.
- Materials discovery.
- Optimisation.
- Energy-system modelling.
- Logistics.
- Financial optimisation.

However, quantum computing should not automatically be considered environmentally sustainable.

Quantum systems may require sophisticated infrastructure, including specialised cooling and control systems.

Therefore, lifecycle energy consumption must be evaluated carefully.

13. Quantum Machine Learning

Quantum machine learning combines concepts from quantum computing and machine learning.

Potential research areas include:

- Quantum-enhanced optimisation.
- Quantum neural networks.
- Hybrid quantum-classical algorithms.
- Quantum feature mapping.

A likely near-term architecture is:

Classical Computer + AI + Quantum Processor

rather than fully quantum computing.

14. Hybrid Computing

Future advanced computing systems may combine multiple architectures.

For example:

CPU + GPU + NPU + Quantum Processor + Edge Device

Each component can perform tasks for which it is most efficient.

This creates heterogeneous computing.

The objective becomes:

Match each computational task with the most efficient architecture.

15. Energy-Efficient Data Centres

Data centres are central to the digital economy.

Their energy consumption includes:

- Computing.
- Cooling.
- Networking.
- Storage.
- Backup systems.

AI can optimise data-centre operations by predicting workloads and adjusting infrastructure dynamically.

Potential optimisation areas include:

- Cooling.
- Server allocation.
- Workload scheduling.
- Energy procurement.

16. Intelligent Cooling Systems

Cooling can represent a significant component of data-centre energy consumption.

AI can analyse:

- Temperature.
- Humidity.
- Server utilisation.
- Cooling-system performance.

Predictive models can identify optimal cooling configurations.

This can reduce unnecessary energy consumption.

17. Renewable-Powered Computing

Data centres can increasingly integrate:

- Solar power.
- Wind power.
- Battery storage.
- Renewable-energy purchasing.

AI can coordinate computational workloads with renewable-energy availability.

For example:

High Solar Generation → Increased Flexible Computing

Low Renewable Generation → Reduced or Rescheduled Workloads

18. Carbon-Aware Computing

Not all electricity has the same carbon intensity.

The carbon footprint of computation depends partly on the energy source powering the system.

Carbon-aware computing can schedule flexible workloads according to:

- Electricity demand.
- Renewable generation.
- Grid carbon intensity.

This creates an additional optimisation objective:

Performance + Cost + Energy + Carbon

19. Green Cloud Computing

Cloud providers can improve sustainability through:

- Server virtualisation.
- Dynamic resource allocation.
- Efficient cooling.
- Renewable energy.
- Workload consolidation.

AI can help optimise these processes.

20. Efficient Algorithms

Hardware efficiency alone is insufficient.

Algorithms themselves can consume very different amounts of computational resources.

Efficient algorithms can:

- Reduce execution time.
- Reduce memory usage.
- Reduce energy requirements.

Therefore:

Algorithmic Efficiency + Hardware Efficiency

should be considered together.

21. Sustainable Semiconductor Computing

Semiconductor manufacturing requires:

- Energy.
- Water.
- Chemicals.
- Raw materials.

As computational demand increases, the environmental footprint of chip production becomes increasingly important.

Future computing sustainability therefore needs lifecycle analysis covering:

Manufacturing → Transportation → Operation → Maintenance → Disposal

22. Electronic Waste

Rapid hardware innovation can increase electronic waste.

E-waste may contain:

- Metals.
- Plastics.
- Rare materials.
- Hazardous substances.

Strategies include:

- Hardware longevity.
- Modular designs.
- Repairability.
- Recycling.
- Component reuse.

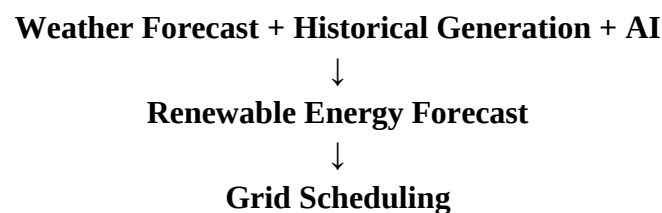
23. AI for Renewable Energy

AI can improve renewable-energy integration by forecasting:

- Solar generation.
- Wind generation.
- Energy demand.

This can improve grid stability.

For example:



24. Smart Grid Optimisation

Modern power systems are becoming increasingly complex.

AI can optimise:

- Generation.
- Storage.
- Transmission.
- Distribution.
- Demand response.

Quantum optimisation may eventually contribute to some complex grid-optimisation problems, although practical large-scale advantages remain an active research area.

25. Sustainable Transportation

Advanced computing can optimise transportation systems.

AI can support:

- Traffic prediction.
- Route optimisation.
- Fleet management.
- Electric-vehicle charging.
- Public transport scheduling.

Quantum optimisation could potentially contribute to selected complex routing and scheduling problems as the technology matures.

26. Climate Modelling

Climate systems are computationally complex.

High-performance computing combined with AI can improve:

- Weather forecasting.
- Climate simulations.
- Extreme-event prediction.
- Downscaling.
- Environmental modelling.

AI surrogate models can sometimes approximate computationally expensive simulations, potentially reducing computation for specific tasks.

27. Sustainable Agriculture

AI and advanced computing can support:

- Crop forecasting.
- Precision irrigation.
- Pest detection.
- Fertiliser optimisation.
- Autonomous farming.

Energy-efficient edge devices can allow intelligent monitoring directly in agricultural environments.

28. Sustainable Healthcare

Advanced computing can improve:

- Medical imaging.
- Drug discovery.
- Disease prediction.
- Personalised medicine.

Quantum computing may eventually support molecular simulation and drug-discovery workloads.

However, claims of practical quantum advantage in healthcare should remain evidence-based as the field develops.

29. Materials Discovery

New materials are essential for:

- Batteries.
- Solar cells.
- Hydrogen technologies.
- Carbon capture.
- Energy storage.

AI can accelerate materials screening.

Quantum computing could eventually provide additional capabilities for simulating molecular and material properties.

This creates a promising convergence:

AI + Quantum Simulation + Materials Science

30. Circular Economy

Advanced computing can support circular-economy systems through:

- Product lifecycle prediction.
- Waste classification.
- Material tracking.
- Reverse logistics.
- Recycling optimisation.

Computer vision can automatically classify recyclable materials.

AI can also optimise collection routes.

Table 1. Advanced Computing Technologies and Sustainability Applications

Technology	Primary Function	Sustainability Application
AI	Prediction and optimisation	Energy and resource efficiency
GPU	Parallel computation	Efficient AI workloads
NPU	AI acceleration	Low-power inference
Edge AI	Local processing	Reduced data transmission
Neuromorphic Computing	Event-driven processing	Low-power intelligence
Quantum Computing	Specialised computation	Optimisation and simulation
Digital Twins	System simulation	Infrastructure optimisation

Technology	Primary Function	Sustainability Application
Cloud Computing	Scalable computing	Resource consolidation
HPC	Large-scale computation	Climate and scientific modelling

31. Convergence of AI and Quantum Computing

AI and quantum computing can complement one another.

AI can help optimise quantum systems by:

- Calibrating hardware.
- Reducing noise.
- Optimising circuits.
- Managing experiments.

Quantum processors may eventually accelerate selected computational components used in AI.

This creates a potential feedback relationship:

AI → Improves Quantum Systems

Quantum Computing → Potentially Enhances Selected AI Workloads

32. Quantum Error Correction

One of the major challenges in quantum computing is noise.

Quantum states are highly sensitive to environmental disturbances.

Error correction is therefore essential for reliable large-scale quantum computing.

However, error correction introduces additional computational and hardware overhead.

Consequently, practical sustainability requires examining:

Quantum Performance Gain vs. Infrastructure Cost

33. Computational Efficiency Metrics

Traditional computing is often evaluated using:

- Speed.
- Accuracy.
- Throughput.
- Cost.

Sustainable computing requires additional metrics:

- Energy per computation.
- Carbon emissions per workload.
- Water consumption.
- Hardware utilisation.
- Lifecycle environmental impact.

A broader evaluation framework could therefore be:

Performance + Energy + Carbon + Materials + Water + Lifecycle

34. Proposed Sustainable Advanced Computing Framework

The proposed framework consists of seven layers.

Layer 1 — Sustainable Data Sources

Sensors, satellites, scientific databases, IoT devices.

↓

Layer 2 — Efficient Data Infrastructure

Edge computing, efficient networking, storage optimisation.

↓

Layer 3 — Intelligent Computing

AI, machine learning, neuromorphic systems.

↓

Layer 4 — Advanced Computational Layer

HPC, GPU acceleration, quantum and hybrid computing.

↓

Layer 5 — Energy Intelligence

Renewable energy, energy storage, carbon-aware scheduling.

↓

Layer 6 — Sustainable Applications

Energy, healthcare, agriculture, transportation, climate, manufacturing.

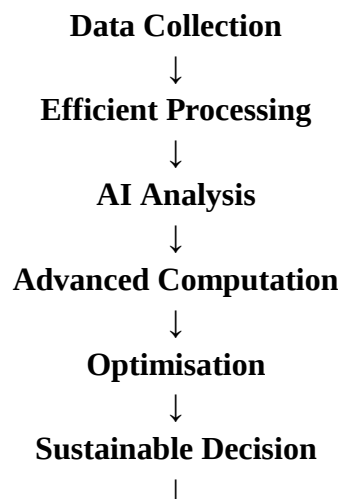
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Layer 7 — Governance and Lifecycle Management

Security, ethics, accessibility, e-waste, lifecycle assessment.

35. Integrated Data Flow

The framework can be represented as:



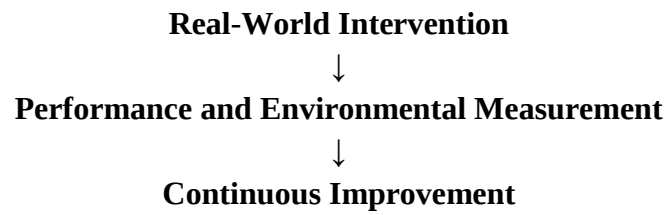


Table 2. Conventional and Sustainable Advanced Computing

Dimension	Conventional Approach	Sustainable Advanced Computing
Primary Goal	Maximum performance	Performance + sustainability
Hardware	General-purpose	Heterogeneous
AI	Large-scale models	Efficient AI
Computing	Centralised	Cloud + Edge
Energy	Consumption-focused	Carbon-aware
Quantum	Experimental	Hybrid specialised computing
Cooling	Fixed optimisation	AI-driven
Infrastructure	Static	Adaptive
Hardware Lifecycle	Replacement-oriented	Circular approach
Evaluation	Speed/accuracy	Performance + environmental impact

36. Challenges

36.1 High Infrastructure Costs

Advanced computing technologies require significant capital investment.

36.2 Quantum Technology Maturity

Large-scale fault-tolerant quantum computing remains technically challenging.

36.3 Energy Demand

Large AI workloads can increase electricity requirements.

36.4 Cooling Requirements

High-performance computing can generate substantial heat.

36.5 Semiconductor Supply Chains

Advanced chips depend on complex global supply chains and critical materials.

36.6 E-Waste

Rapid hardware replacement can increase electronic waste.

36.7 Skills Shortage

The convergence of AI, quantum computing, semiconductor engineering, and sustainability requires interdisciplinary expertise.

36.8 Digital Inequality

Advanced computing infrastructure may be concentrated in wealthier institutions and countries.

37. Ethical Considerations

Sustainable advanced computing should address:

- Fair access to technology.
- Responsible AI.
- Data privacy.
- Algorithmic transparency.
- Cybersecurity.
- Environmental justice.

The benefits of computational innovation should not be concentrated among a small number of organisations while environmental costs are distributed across society.

38. Policy Recommendations

1. Develop Green Computing Standards

Governments and industry should establish common sustainability metrics for computational infrastructure.

2. Encourage Energy-Efficient AI

Research funding should support efficient models, hardware, and algorithms.

3. Promote Renewable-Powered Data Centres

Digital infrastructure should increasingly integrate low-carbon electricity.

4. Support Quantum Research

Public investment can support foundational quantum research while maintaining realistic expectations concerning commercial benefits.

5. Encourage Circular Hardware

Hardware design should emphasise longevity, repairability, recycling, and responsible material use.

6. Establish Carbon-Aware Computing Policies

Large computing facilities should measure and manage their carbon footprint.

7. Expand Interdisciplinary Education

Universities should integrate:

AI + Quantum Computing + Computer Engineering + Sustainability
into advanced training programmes.

39. Future Directions

39.1 Quantum-AI Hybrid Systems

Hybrid quantum-classical architectures may become increasingly important for specialised optimisation and simulation problems.

39.2 Neuromorphic AI

Low-power neuromorphic systems may support intelligent edge devices.

39.3 Self-Optimising Data Centres

AI may continuously optimise cooling, workloads, energy, and hardware utilisation.

39.4 Carbon-Aware AI

Future AI systems may select computational strategies based partly on environmental cost.

39.5 Sustainable Foundation Models

Research may increasingly focus on models that provide strong performance using significantly fewer computational resources.

39.6 Green Quantum Computing

Future quantum architectures may place greater emphasis on reducing cooling, control, and error-correction overhead.

39.7 Digital Twins of Sustainable Infrastructure

Advanced computing can enable real-time digital replicas of:

- Cities.
- Energy grids.
- Transportation networks.
- Water systems.
- Industrial facilities.

40. Questionnaire

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

No.	Statement
1	AI can contribute significantly to sustainable development.
2	Energy-efficient computing is essential for future digital infrastructure.
3	AI systems should be evaluated according to their environmental impact.
4	Edge computing can reduce unnecessary data-processing requirements.
5	Quantum computing may contribute to solving complex sustainability problems.
6	Renewable energy should be increasingly used to power data centres.
7	Electronic-waste reduction should be considered when designing computing systems.
8	Carbon-aware computing should become an industry standard.
9	Sustainable computing requires interdisciplinary expertise.
10	Governments should support research into energy-efficient advanced computing.

41. Discussion

The convergence of AI, quantum technologies, and energy-efficient computing represents an emerging paradigm in sustainable digital transformation.

AI provides powerful capabilities for prediction, optimisation, and autonomous decision-making. Quantum computing offers a fundamentally different computational approach that may eventually provide advantages for selected optimisation and simulation problems. Energy-efficient architectures ensure that computational progress does not translate directly into proportional increases in environmental impact.

However, these technologies should not be treated as inherently sustainable.

For example, an AI system may reduce energy consumption in a smart grid while requiring substantial energy to train and operate. Similarly, quantum computing may eventually accelerate specific scientific calculations but requires specialised infrastructure.

Therefore, sustainability must be evaluated at the system and lifecycle level.

The relevant question is not simply:

How powerful is the technology?

Instead:

How much societal value can the technology generate relative to the energy, carbon, materials, water, and infrastructure required to operate it?

This broader perspective can help guide responsible technological development.

42. Conclusion

Advanced computing is becoming increasingly important for addressing complex sustainability challenges. Artificial Intelligence can improve prediction and optimisation, quantum technologies may eventually address selected computationally intensive problems, and energy-efficient computing can reduce the environmental cost of digital infrastructure.

Their convergence could support applications in:

- Renewable energy.
- Smart grids.
- Climate modelling.
- Sustainable agriculture.
- Transportation.
- Healthcare.
- Materials science.
- Circular economies.

Nevertheless, technological progress alone cannot guarantee sustainability. High energy consumption, hardware manufacturing impacts, cooling requirements, e-waste, cybersecurity, unequal access, and technological uncertainty must be considered.

The future of sustainable computing therefore requires a shift from performance-centric computing to sustainability-aware computing.

A successful paradigm can be expressed as:

AI Intelligence + Quantum Capability + Energy Efficiency + Renewable Infrastructure + Circular Hardware + Responsible Governance

The ultimate objective should be to build computational systems that are not only faster and more intelligent, but also energy-efficient, environmentally responsible, economically viable, socially inclusive, and aligned with long-term sustainable development goals.

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