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The Convergence Economy: How AI, Biotechnology, Quantum Technologies and Advanced Materials Are Reshaping Innovation Systems

Dr. Julian Hartmann

Professor, European Institute for Emerging Technologies, Vienna, Austria

Abstract

The contemporary innovation economy is increasingly shaped by interaction among technologies that were previously developed within separate scientific and industrial domains. Artificial intelligence contributes prediction, optimization, automated experimentation, and knowledge extraction. Biotechnology provides tools for understanding and engineering living systems. Quantum technologies introduce new possibilities in computation, sensing, communication, and simulation. Advanced materials supply the physical properties required for next-generation energy, electronics, healthcare, infrastructure, and manufacturing. Their convergence is changing how research is organized, how firms innovate, and how economic value is created.

This study develops a simulation-based framework for evaluating pairwise synergies among these four frontier technology domains. The assessment considers knowledge complementarity, platform sharing, commercialization potential, infrastructure requirements, and system-level effects. The simulated convergence scores were 92 for artificial intelligence and biotechnology, 88 for artificial intelligence and advanced materials, 84 for biotechnology and advanced materials, 81 for quantum technologies and advanced materials, 78 for artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, and 64 for biotechnology and quantum technologies. These values are illustrative analytical scenarios rather than observed industry statistics. The strongest near-term synergy emerged between artificial intelligence and biotechnology because data-intensive biological research can be connected directly with predictive modeling, automated experimentation, and design–build–test–learn cycles.

The analysis indicates that convergence is not generated simply by placing different technologies within the same organization. It depends on interoperable infrastructure, multidisciplinary skills, shared standards, translational institutions, patient capital, and governance capable of addressing cross-domain risks. Innovation systems organized around separate disciplines and sector-specific funding may struggle to support technologies whose economic value emerges at their boundaries. The study concludes that the convergence economy requires platform-oriented research systems, collaborative experimentation, responsible innovation, and policies that distribute capabilities beyond a small number of technologically dominant organizations.

Keywords: convergence economy; artificial intelligence; biotechnology; quantum technologies; advanced materials; innovation systems; frontier technologies; technological transformation

1. Introduction

Economic transformation has often been associated with general-purpose technologies such as steam power, electricity, and digital computing. Their significance did not arise from one application alone. They altered production, communication, transportation, organizational structure, and the direction of subsequent innovation. A comparable transformation is now emerging through the interaction of several frontier technologies rather than the diffusion of a single dominant invention.

Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and advanced materials are frequently treated as distinct sectors. Their scientific communities, funding programs, professional vocabularies, regulatory systems, and supply chains developed along different historical paths. This separation is becoming less consistent with the actual organization of innovation. Artificial intelligence is used to analyze genomic data, predict protein structure, optimize quantum systems, and search materials-design spaces. Biotechnology is used to create functional materials and sustainable production processes. Quantum sensing can support biological measurement and materials characterization. Advanced materials enable quantum devices, bioreactors, medical implants, energy systems, and high-performance computing.

The concept of a convergence economy describes an innovation system in which value emerges from the recombination of capabilities across technological boundaries. Knowledge does not move through a simple linear path from basic research to product development. It circulates among data platforms, automated laboratories, specialized manufacturers, research institutions, startups, investors, regulators, and users. Innovation becomes increasingly dependent on shared infrastructure and cross-disciplinary translation.

This transformation creates substantial opportunities. Convergent platforms can shorten experimental cycles, reduce the cost of candidate screening, improve precision, and support solutions to complex health, energy, climate, and industrial problems. The OECD has observed that collaborative platforms in genomics, advanced materials, and engineering biology can act as convergence spaces where diverse disciplines, actors, and technologies are combined.

Convergence also creates risks. Organizations with privileged access to data, computing, laboratories, fabrication facilities, and intellectual property can accumulate disproportionate power. Dual-use capabilities may cross the boundaries of established regulation. Complex value chains can become dependent on scarce materials, specialized equipment, or geographically concentrated suppliers. These conditions require innovation policy to consider the architecture of the complete technological system rather than promote isolated sectors.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Convergence as Knowledge Recombination

Innovation research has long recognized that new technologies frequently emerge through the recombination of existing knowledge. Schumpeter described innovation as the formation of new combinations of products, processes, markets, and organizational arrangements. Later research emphasized that combinations are more likely to succeed when organizations possess sufficient related knowledge to understand and integrate different inputs.

Convergence extends this principle across disciplinary and sectoral boundaries. It does not mean that technologies become identical. Instead, their distinct capabilities become mutually enabling. Artificial intelligence requires advanced hardware and materials, while materials discovery increasingly depends on data-intensive modeling. Biotechnology relies on sensors, automation, and computational analysis, while biological processes can produce new materials.

Roco and Bainbridge examined convergence among nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science. Their framework highlighted the possibility that interaction among foundational technologies could generate changes beyond the capabilities of any single field. The contemporary convergence economy expands this logic through artificial intelligence, quantum information, automated research, synthetic biology, and advanced manufacturing.

2.2 Artificial Intelligence as a Connecting Technology

Artificial intelligence is distinctive because it can operate as a general analytical layer across different scientific domains. Machine learning can identify relationships within large datasets, predict properties, generate candidate designs, optimize experiments, and allocate research resources. These capabilities allow AI to connect biological, chemical, physical, and engineering information.

In biotechnology, artificial intelligence can support genomic interpretation, protein modeling, molecular screening, process optimization, and patient stratification. Shah and colleagues described clinical development as increasingly influenced by the convergence of large digital datasets, computational power, and machine-learning methods. However, data quality, interpretability, and external validation remain important constraints.

In materials research, machine learning can estimate structure–property relationships and prioritize candidate compositions before physical synthesis. Butler and colleagues reviewed machine learning for molecular and materials science, demonstrating its potential across prediction and discovery. The economic value emerges when computational prediction is connected with automated experimentation, materials characterization, and scalable manufacturing.

2.3 Biotechnology, Quantum Systems, and Materials Platforms

Biotechnology has moved from observing biological systems toward designing and engineering them. Synthetic biology uses standardized genetic components, computational design, and automated experimentation to create new biological functions. The design–build–test–learn cycle provides a structured process in which experimental results inform subsequent designs.

Advanced materials are central to this process because biological and engineered systems require interfaces, substrates, membranes, catalysts, and functional structures. Engineering biology can also produce materials with properties inspired by natural systems. The OECD’s Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook discussed biologically produced materials such as spider silk as examples of cross-domain innovation.

Quantum technologies remain less commercially mature but may influence several convergence pathways. Quantum computation may eventually contribute to molecular simulation, optimization, and materials modeling. Quantum sensing offers nearer-term possibilities for precise measurement in navigation, healthcare, environmental monitoring, and materials characterization. These systems depend heavily on advanced materials with controlled quantum properties.

3. Objectives of the Study

3.1 Analytical Objectives

The first objective is to evaluate the relative innovation potential of pairwise convergence among artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and advanced materials. The assessment considers complementarity, shared infrastructure, commercialization opportunities, and technological maturity.

The second objective is to identify how convergence changes the structure of innovation systems. This includes the transition from discipline-specific research organizations toward shared platforms, automated laboratories, multidisciplinary teams, and integrated data–experiment–manufacturing workflows.

3.2 Policy and Governance Objectives

The study seeks to examine the institutional conditions required for responsible convergence. These include interoperable standards, research infrastructure, workforce development, intellectual-property arrangements, technology transfer, patient finance, and mechanisms for managing safety and dual-use concerns.

A further objective is to develop a transparent comparative framework that can later be applied to verified patent, publication, investment, collaboration, or commercialization data. The present simulation demonstrates the analytical approach without claiming actual market measurement.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The investigation employed a simulation-based comparative design. No original firm survey, patent dataset, investment database, or laboratory experiment was available. Numerical scores were therefore constructed as illustrative scenarios informed by established literature on emerging technologies and innovation systems.

The study examined six unique pairwise convergence relationships among four technologies. The diagonal values in the graphical matrix represent each technology as a core domain and were not interpreted as convergence scores. Only off-diagonal values were used for comparative analysis.

4.2 Evaluation Dimensions

Five dimensions were used: knowledge complementarity, shared-platform potential, commercialization proximity, infrastructure compatibility, and system-level impact. Each dimension was evaluated on a five-point scale.

The composite convergence-synergy score was expressed as:

$$CSS_{ij}=100(0.24K_{ij}+0.19P_{ij}+0.20C_{ij}+0.17I_{ij}+0.20S_{ij})/5$$

where CSSij represents the synergy between technologies i and j; K is knowledge complementarity; P, platform sharing; C, commercialization proximity; I, infrastructure compatibility; and S, system-level impact.

Knowledge complementarity received the largest weight because convergence requires distinct capabilities that can be integrated into a coherent innovation process. Commercialization and system impact received equal substantial weights, while platform and infrastructure compatibility reflected the practical difficulty of bringing technologies together.

4.3 Technology-Pair Definitions

Artificial intelligence–biotechnology convergence included biological-data analysis, protein and molecular prediction, automated laboratories, bioprocess optimization, and precision medicine. AI–advanced materials convergence included materials informatics, inverse design, automated characterization, and process optimization.

Biotechnology–advanced materials convergence included biofabrication, biomaterials, biological coatings, biodegradable polymers, and tissue-engineering structures. Quantum–advanced materials convergence included superconducting materials, quantum dots, photonic materials, and device fabrication. AI–quantum convergence included quantum-control optimization, error mitigation, circuit design, and quantum-enhanced learning. Biotechnology–quantum convergence included quantum sensing for biological measurement and longer-term molecular-simulation applications.

Table 1. Analytical definition of frontier-technology convergence pairs

Convergence pair	Representative integration pathway	Principal constraint
AI and biotechnology	Predictive biological design and automated experimentation	Data quality, biological uncertainty, and dual use
AI and advanced materials	Materials informatics and inverse design	Limited standardized datasets and manufacturing validation
Biotechnology and advanced materials	Biomaterials and biological production	Scale-up, durability, and regulatory classification
Quantum and advanced materials	Quantum devices, sensors, and functional materials	Fabrication precision and supply-chain concentration
AI and quantum technologies	Quantum-system control and computational optimization	Hardware immaturity and uncertain advantage
Biotechnology and quantum technologies	Biological sensing and molecular simulation	Early maturity and limited application validation

4.4 Scenario Construction and Analytical Integrity

The simulated setting represented a national innovation system containing research universities, applied laboratories, startups, large technology firms, public research agencies, investors, and regulatory bodies. It assumed uneven maturity across technologies and recognized that scientific promise does not automatically produce commercialization.

Scores were aggregated and compared descriptively. No inferential tests were applied because the values were constructed rather than sampled. Integrity controls included explicit labeling of simulation, separation of literature findings from author-developed values, and avoidance of claims about specific companies, markets, or national economies.

5. Analysis

5.1 Comparative Convergence Scores

Artificial intelligence and biotechnology achieved the highest simulated synergy score of 92. This reflects the direct compatibility between high-dimensional biological data and computational modeling. The pair also benefits from automated experimentation, where machine-learning systems can propose candidates and experimental platforms can generate new data for subsequent model improvement.

Artificial intelligence and advanced materials achieved 88. Materials research often involves large candidate spaces in which composition, processing, structure, and properties interact. Machine learning can prioritize promising regions of this space, although laboratory synthesis and manufacturing validation remain essential.

Biotechnology and advanced materials achieved 84. Their convergence supports biomaterials, regenerative medicine, biodegradable materials, biosensors, and biologically enabled manufacturing. Scaling from laboratory demonstrations to stable industrial processes remains a significant challenge.

Quantum technologies and advanced materials achieved 81 because quantum devices depend directly on material purity, interfaces, defects, thermal behavior, and fabrication quality. AI and quantum technologies achieved 78, reflecting substantial research potential but uncertainty about hardware maturity and practical computational advantage. Biotechnology and quantum technologies achieved 64 because their interaction remains comparatively early and specialized.

Table 2. Simulated frontier-technology convergence assessment

Technology pair	Platform readiness	Commercialization proximity	System impact	Synergy score
AI–biotechnology	4.8/5	4.5/5	4.8/5	92
AI–advanced materials	4.5/5	4.3/5	4.6/5	88
Biotechnology–advanced materials	4.2/5	4.2/5	4.4/5	84
Quantum–	4.1/5	3.5/5	4.5/5	81

Technology pair	Platform readiness	Commercialization proximity	System impact	Synergy score
advanced materials				
AI–quantum technologies	4.0/5	3.3/5	4.4/5	78
Biotechnology–quantum technologies	3.1/5	2.8/5	3.8/5	64

Source: Author-developed simulation informed by literature on technological convergence.
Caution: The values are illustrative and are not measured industry statistics.

5.2 Innovation-System Effects

The analysis indicates that convergence changes the unit of innovation. The relevant unit is no longer a single laboratory or firm but a connected platform involving data, instruments, fabrication, experimentation, and regulation. Organizations require access to capabilities they may not own internally.

Convergence also changes the speed and direction of experimentation. AI-enabled systems can analyze previous results and propose subsequent experiments. Automated platforms can execute them, while advanced sensors and materials provide improved measurement.

This creates a feedback process:

Data→Model→Design→Experiment→Measurement→Updated Data

The value of this cycle depends on scientific validity. Poor-quality measurements, biased datasets, inappropriate objectives, or uncontrolled experimental conditions can cause rapid but misleading iteration. Automation amplifies both productive learning and systematic error.

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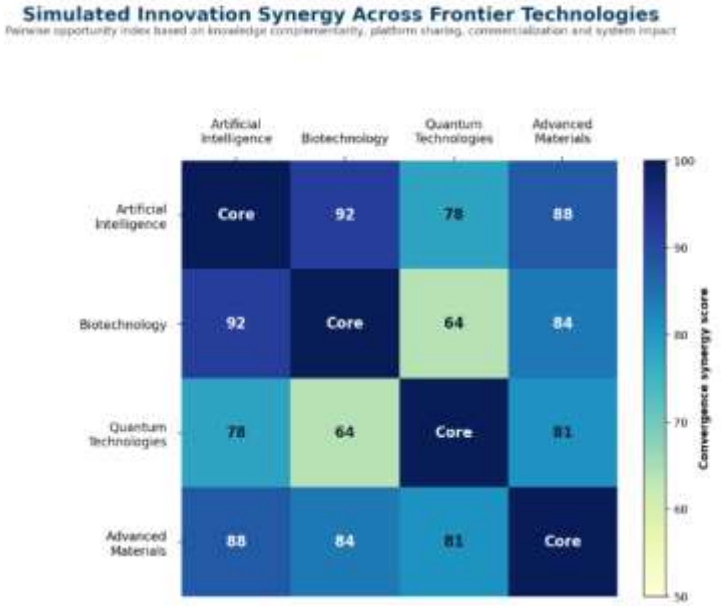
5.3 Graphical Presentation

Graph 1. Simulated Innovation Synergy Across Frontier Technologies



Supporting data: AI–biotechnology, 92; AI–advanced materials, 88; biotechnology–advanced materials, 84; quantum technologies–advanced materials, 81; AI–quantum technologies, 78; and biotechnology–quantum technologies, 64; Diagonal cells identify the core technology and are not convergence scores.

Interpretation: Artificial intelligence displays strong simulated synergy with biotechnology and advanced materials because it can function as a cross-domain analytical and design platform. Advanced materials also show substantial synergy across all three other domains because physical performance constrains biological, digital, and quantum systems.

Key finding: The strongest near-term convergence appears between AI and biotechnology, while biotechnology–quantum integration remains comparatively early. Lower current maturity does not imply limited long-term scientific significance; it indicates a greater distance from broadly validated applications.

Source: Author-developed simulation. Off-diagonal values are illustrative and are not observed industry statistics.

6. Challenges

6.1 Disciplinary and Organizational Fragmentation

Universities, funding agencies, firms, and regulators are frequently organized around established disciplines. Researchers may use incompatible terminology, data formats, evaluation standards, and publication norms. Interdisciplinary projects can also face difficulty during peer review when they do not fit conventional funding categories.

Convergence requires more than multidisciplinary participation. Participants must develop shared problems, methods, and evidence standards. Translational specialists who understand multiple domains can play a critical role, although career structures often provide limited recognition for this work.

6.2 Infrastructure and Access Concentration

Frontier technologies depend on expensive infrastructure, including high-performance computing, automated laboratories, clean rooms, quantum facilities, advanced microscopy, biomanufacturing equipment, and secure data environments. Concentration can improve efficiency but may restrict participation.

Shared facilities can reduce barriers if access is transparent and accompanied by technical support. Merely opening a facility is insufficient when smaller organizations lack the skills to use it. Infrastructure policy should therefore combine physical access with training, data services, and collaboration support.

6.3 Intellectual Property and Data Governance

Convergent innovation creates complex questions about ownership. A product may depend on training data, a biological sequence, an algorithm, a materials formulation, and a fabrication method owned by different parties. Dense intellectual-property arrangements can slow collaboration or exclude new entrants.

Data governance is equally important. Biological and health data may be sensitive, while materials and quantum research may have commercial or national-security implications. Access rules must balance privacy, security, reproducibility, and innovation. Standard agreements and trusted data environments can reduce negotiation costs without eliminating appropriate safeguards.

6.4 Safety, Dual Use, and Regulatory Boundaries

Convergence can amplify dual-use risk because capabilities from one domain increase the power of another. Artificial intelligence may accelerate biological design, while advanced sensing can increase surveillance capability. Quantum technologies may affect cybersecurity and strategic communications.

Regulation is often sector-specific, whereas convergent systems cross several regulatory categories. A biologically produced material, for example, may raise questions involving environmental release, chemical safety, manufacturing, and medical use. Coordinated governance should begin during research and development rather than after commercialization.

7. Discussion

7.1 AI as an Innovation-System Connector

The simulated results position artificial intelligence as a connecting layer rather than an isolated industry. Its value arises from its ability to translate data into prediction, design, and experimental priorities. This role explains its strong synergy with biotechnology and advanced materials.

AI does not remove the need for domain expertise. Biological systems contain causal, evolutionary, and environmental complexity that cannot be inferred reliably from every dataset. Materials predicted to have desirable properties may be difficult to synthesize or manufacture. Scientists must evaluate whether models use valid representations and whether predictions remain within a defensible domain.

The most productive systems are therefore likely to combine machine prediction with experimental verification and expert interpretation. Convergence should strengthen the relationship between computation and physical evidence rather than permit computational plausibility to replace validation.

7.2 Platform-Oriented Innovation Systems

Traditional research policy often funds individual projects or institutions. The convergence economy increases the importance of shared platforms that connect data, equipment, expertise, standards, and users. Such platforms can enable multiple projects and support learning across applications.

Platform governance is crucial. Dominant firms may control access, standards, or data. Publicly supported platforms should include transparent eligibility, fair pricing, intellectual-property rules, cybersecurity, and mechanisms for smaller organizations to participate.

Collaborative platforms can also support technology assessment. Scientists, engineers, social researchers, regulators, and affected communities can examine potential risks during development. This anticipatory function becomes increasingly important when technologies combine faster than legal frameworks evolve.

7.3 Skills and Institutional Adaptation

Convergence creates demand for individuals who can work across boundaries without losing depth in a core discipline. Relevant capabilities include computational literacy, experimental design, systems thinking, data governance, regulatory awareness, and collaborative communication.

Universities can respond through joint laboratories, team-based research, shared doctoral training, and modular education. However, interdisciplinary programs should not become collections of introductory courses lacking substantive expertise. Effective convergence teams require both disciplinary depth and translation capability.

Innovation agencies should also adapt evaluation systems. Conventional indicators such as patents or research spending may not capture platform creation, data resources, standards, or shared experimental capability. Monitoring should consider collaboration quality, technology transfer, startup formation, workforce development, safety practices, and distribution of access.

8. Conclusion

The convergence economy represents a shift from sector-specific technological development toward interconnected systems of knowledge, infrastructure, and experimentation. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and advanced materials increasingly shape one another's development. Their combined influence can accelerate discovery, create new production pathways, and address complex societal challenges.

The simulation identified particularly strong synergy between artificial intelligence and biotechnology, followed by AI and advanced materials. Biotechnology and advanced materials also displayed substantial compatibility, while quantum technologies depended strongly on materials capability. Biotechnology–quantum convergence received the lowest current score because its applications remain comparatively early, although future sensing and simulation developments may alter this relationship.

These scores are illustrative and cannot be treated as empirical market findings. Future studies should test the framework using publication co-classification, patent citations, collaborative networks, venture investment, shared infrastructure, product launches, and regulatory records. Longitudinal analysis would be especially valuable because convergence pathways change as technologies mature.

The central conclusion is that frontier technologies will reshape innovation systems most profoundly through interaction. Realizing their benefits requires shared platforms, multidisciplinary expertise, experimental validation, patient investment, and responsible governance. Innovation policy should support connections across domains while preventing access, data, and infrastructure from becoming concentrated in a small number of organizations. The convergence economy will be determined not only by what technologies can do individually, but by how institutions choose to combine and govern them.

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