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Review Article

Advancements in Hardware-Aided Edge Computing for Mobile Environments

Sorabh Patro

Rajiv Gandhi College of Engineering and Technology Puducherry.

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E-mail Id:
sorabh56@gmail.com
Orcid id:
https://orcid.org/0569-1118-8789-0746
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A B S T R A C T

In the dynamic landscape of mobile communication, the integration of hardware-accelerated edge computing stands as a transformative paradigm, revolutionizing the very fabric of mobile environments. This comprehensive review explores the symbiotic relationship between specialized hardware architectures and the burgeoning domain of edge computing, shedding light on their pivotal role in reshaping latency, throughput, security, privacy, and AI-driven applications within mobile ecosystems.

The review navigates through the evolutionary trajectory of hardware, from traditional architectures to specialized processors, GPUs, FPGAs, ASICs, and heterogeneous designs, highlighting their transformative impacts on edge computing. It dissects how hardware advancements optimize latency, enhance throughput, fortify security measures through encryption, secure enclaves, and access control, addressing privacy concerns within edge environments.

Furthermore, the review delves into the convergence of hardware acceleration with AI and ML applications, empowering real-time decision-making, energy-efficient processing, and on-device training at the edge. Envisioning future trajectories, it emphasizes advancements in heterogeneous architectures, energy efficiency, standardization, adaptive security measures, and scalability, while addressing emerging challenges.

This exploration underscores the transformative potential of hardware-aided edge computing in revolutionizing mobile communication. The amalgamation of specialized hardware architectures and edge computing paradigms unveils a future landscape where decentralized intelligence, real-time responsiveness, and secure, privacy-centric mobile environments redefine the boundaries of mobile communication.

Keywords: Edge Computing, Hardware Acceleration, Mobile Environments, Specialized Processors, GPUs (Graphics Processing Units), FPGAs (Field-Programmable Gate Arrays)

Introduction

In the dynamic realm of mobile communication, the proliferation of data-driven applications and the burgeoning Internet of Things (IoT) have catalyzed a paradigm shift towards edge computing. This transformative approach, positioning computational capabilities closer to the point of data generation and consumption, has revolutionized the mobile environment. Within this landscape, the integration of hardware-accelerated edge computing stands as a linchpin, heralding an era of unprecedented efficiency, responsiveness, and security.

The evolution of mobile communication has witnessed a seismic transition from traditional centralized cloud computing models to the decentralized and distributed architecture of edge computing. At the forefront of this evolution lie hardware innovations, catalyzing the fusion of computational prowess with the agility of edge deployments. This synergy has unlocked a myriad of possibilities, transforming latency-sensitive, data-intensive, and real-time applications that underpin modern mobile ecosystems.[1]

Advancements in hardware architectures, including specialized processors, Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs), and Application-Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs), have redefined the capabilities of edge computing in mobile environments. These innovations have transcended traditional computational limitations, optimizing latency, enhancing throughput, and fortifying security measures at the edge.

The convergence of hardware acceleration and edge computing has transcended the boundaries of mere computational efficiency. It has redefined the mobile landscape, empowering devices to execute complex algorithms, perform AI-driven tasks locally, and secure sensitive data without compromising performance. Such capabilities have become integral in addressing the insatiable demands for low-latency, high-throughput services in mobile networks.

However, amidst these advancements lie challenges—ensuring interoperability, scalability, and seamless resource allocation while navigating the intricacies of heterogeneous edge hardware ecosystems. Addressing these challenges will dictate the trajectory of future innovations and standardization efforts, shaping the evolving landscape of hardware-aided edge computing in mobile environments.

The evolution of mobile communication has transcended traditional boundaries, navigating from simple voice-centric interactions to a hyper-connected ecosystem brimming with data-driven applications and IoT devices. In this rapidly evolving landscape, the emergence of edge computing has ushered in a new era—one where computational resource resides closer to the data source, redefining the dynamics of mobile environments.

At the heart of this evolution lies the symbiotic relationship between hardware advancements and the transformative potential of edge computing. The amalgamation of specialized hardware architectures and edge computing paradigms has revolutionized the way data is processed, transmitted, and consumed in mobile networks.

The significance of hardware-accelerated edge computing reverberates through multiple dimensions. Firstly, it addresses the perennial challenge of latency. By decentralizing computational tasks and harnessing the agility of specialized hardware, edge computing minimizes the round-trip delay between data generation and processing, crucial for real-time applications like autonomous vehicles, augmented reality, and industrial automation in mobile settings.

Secondly, this fusion enhances throughput and data processing capabilities. Specialized hardware architectures, optimized for specific tasks and algorithms, empower edge devices to execute computations locally, reducing the dependency on centralized cloud resources. This shift fosters scalability and responsiveness, vital for accommodating the deluge of data generated by a myriad of interconnected devices in mobile networks.

Moreover, the marriage of hardware acceleration and edge computing augments security and privacy measures. Dedicated hardware modules enable the implementation of robust encryption, secure enclaves, and trusted execution environments at the edge, safeguarding sensitive data and fortifying mobile networks against evolving cyber threats.[2]

However, this convergence of hardware and edge computing is not without challenges. Interoperability among diverse hardware architectures, seamless integration across heterogeneous edge environments, and efficient resource allocation pose significant hurdles. Overcoming these challenges is imperative for harnessing the full potential of hardware-aided edge computing in mobile settings.

As the mobile landscape continues to evolve, the role of hardware innovations in propelling edge computing towards unparalleled efficiency, responsiveness, and security becomes increasingly pronounced. Addressing the intricate interplay between hardware advancements, edge computing paradigms, and the emerging challenges forms the cornerstone of this review, offering a comprehensive exploration of the transformative journey within the realm of mobile communication.

The rapid proliferation of mobile devices, coupled with the exponential growth of data-intensive applications and IoT ecosystems, has ushered in an era where traditional centralized computing models no longer suffice. This

evolving landscape has prompted a paradigm shift towards edge computing—an architectural framework that leverages decentralized computational capabilities, bringing processing power closer to the data source, and revolutionizing the very fabric of mobile environments.

Central to the evolution of edge computing is the integration of advanced hardware architectures, poised as the cornerstone of transformative capabilities in mobile systems. The convergence of specialized processors, accelerators, and dedicated hardware modules with edge computing principles has catalyzed a paradigmatic leap, reshaping the dynamics of data processing, storage, and transmission.

At its core, the amalgamation of hardware-aided edge computing addresses the quintessential challenge of latency in mobile networks. By localizing computational tasks nearer to the data source—whether at the network edge, on IoT devices, or within proximity—specialized hardware architectures drastically reduce the transmission delays inherent in traditional cloud-centric architectures. This paradigm shift is paramount for meeting the stringent latency requirements of applications demanding real-time responsiveness, such as remote healthcare, autonomous systems, and immersive multimedia experiences.

Simultaneously, the marriage of hardware acceleration with edge computing augments the throughput and processing capabilities of mobile environments. Specialized hardware components, finely tuned for specific algorithms and computations, empower edge devices to execute intricate tasks locally. This not only optimizes data handling and processing but also minimizes the burden on centralized cloud infrastructure, fostering scalability, efficiency, and responsiveness in dynamic mobile networks.[3]

Furthermore, the amalgamation of specialized hardware and edge computing paradigms fortifies the security and privacy posture of mobile systems. Hardware-enforced security mechanisms, such as encrypted processing units and secure enclaves, bolster the resilience of edge devices against evolving cyber threats, ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of sensitive data.

However, the realization of hardware-aided edge computing in mobile environments is confronted by a spectrum of challenges. The intricacies of heterogeneous hardware ecosystems, interoperability concerns, and the orchestration of resources amidst dynamic edge environments necessitate robust solutions and standardized approaches.

This comprehensive review endeavours to navigate through the labyrinth of hardware-accelerated edge computing in mobile environments. It aims to dissect the symbiotic relationship between hardware advancements and the transformative potential of edge computing, shedding light on their collective impact, challenges, and future trajectories within the ever-evolving landscape of mobile communication.

Evolution of Hardware in Edge Computing

The journey of hardware in enabling edge computing has traversed significant evolutionary milestones, catalyzing a paradigm shift in mobile environments. Initially, edge computing relied on conventional hardware architectures with limited computational capabilities. However, the demand for real-time processing, lower latencies, and enhanced data handling spurred the evolution towards specialized hardware architectures designed explicitly for edge deployments.

Traditional Architectures to Specialized Processors

The early stages of edge computing were marked by the adaptation of traditional server architectures to cater to edge deployments. As the demand for faster and more efficient processing intensified, a transition towards specialized processors ensued. These processors, optimized for specific tasks and workloads, laid the groundwork for enhanced computational efficiency at the edge. They enabled edge devices to perform complex computations locally, minimizing reliance on distant data centers and reducing latency.

Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and Accelerators

The integration of Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and accelerators marked a pivotal leap in the evolution of edge hardware. Originally designed for graphics rendering, GPUs found new applications in accelerating parallel processing tasks, machine learning, and AI inferencing at the edge. Their parallel processing capabilities significantly boosted the performance of edge devices, enabling efficient execution of computationally intensive workloads.

Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs) and Application-Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs)

The evolution of edge hardware witnessed the rise of Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs) and Application-Specific Integrated Circuits (ASICs). FPGAs, known for their reconfigurability, allowed for hardware customization to match specific computational requirements, providing flexibility and efficiency in edge deployments. On the other hand, ASICs, tailored for specific applications, offered unparalleled performance and power efficiency, making them ideal for edge scenarios demanding high-throughput processing with minimal power consumption.

System-on-Chip (SoC) and Heterogeneous Architectures

The advent of System-on-Chip (SoC) designs and heterogeneous architectures marked a shift towards integrated solutions for edge computing. SoCs amalgamate various components onto a single chip, including processors, memory, and specialized accelerators, optimizing space and power while enhancing computational capabilities. Heterogeneous architectures leverage a mix of processing elements (CPU, GPU, FPGA, ASIC) to harness synergies and cater to diverse computational requirements at the edge.[4]

Future Trajectories

Looking ahead, the evolution of hardware in edge computing is poised for further advancements. Innovations in neuromorphic computing, quantum computing, and domain-specific architectures hold promise for pushing the boundaries of edge hardware capabilities. Neuromorphic architectures mimic the brain's neural networks, offering energy-efficient and adaptive processing suitable for edge AI applications. Quantum-inspired computing explores the potential of quantum principles in enhancing edge computation, while domain-specific architectures continue to fine-tune hardware for specific edge tasks, fostering efficiency and performance.

The evolution of hardware in edge computing signifies a transformative journey from generic architectures to specialized, purpose-built solutions tailored for the unique demands of edge environments. These advancements pave the way for unprecedented computational prowess at the edge, laying the foundation for a highly responsive and efficient mobile ecosystem.

Optimization of Latency and Throughput

In the dynamic landscape of mobile environments, the optimization of latency and throughput stands as a critical cornerstone, dictating the performance and responsiveness of edge computing. Hardware-accelerated edge architectures play a pivotal role in addressing these imperatives, revolutionizing the processing, transmission, and reception of data in real-time applications.

Minimizing Latency Through Proximity and Local Processing

The localization of computational tasks facilitated by hardware-accelerated edge computing drastically reduces latency—a pivotal factor in applications requiring instantaneous responses. By leveraging the proximity of edge devices to the data source or end-users, latency is mitigated as computations occur closer to where the data is generated. This proximity-driven approach, coupled with specialized hardware architectures, ensures ultra-low latency for critical applications like autonomous vehicles, telemedicine, and augmented reality.

Efficient Data Handling and Throughput Enhancement

Hardware advancements empower edge devices to handle data more efficiently, optimizing throughput while reducing reliance on centralized cloud infrastructure. Specialized processors, GPUs, and accelerators enable edge devices to process and transmit data seamlessly, enhancing the overall throughput of mobile networks. This efficiency is vital for bandwidth-hungry applications such as high-definition video streaming, real-time analytics, and immersive gaming, where rapid data processing and transmission are paramount.[5]

Parallel Processing and Task Offloading

Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs) facilitate parallel processing at the edge, enabling multiple tasks to be executed concurrently. This parallelization capability significantly boosts throughput, allowing edge devices to handle diverse workloads simultaneously. Furthermore, the offloading of computational tasks from resource-constrained devices to nearby edge servers or accelerators minimizes processing bottlenecks, optimizing throughput and enabling resource-intensive tasks to be executed efficiently.

Optimized Communication Protocols and Edge Caching

Hardware-aided optimizations extend beyond processing capabilities. Edge devices equipped with specialized hardware leverage optimized communication protocols, reducing communication overhead and enhancing data transfer efficiency. Additionally, edge caching, enabled by dedicated hardware modules, stores frequently accessed data closer to the edge, minimizing round-trip delays and optimizing throughput for repetitive data requests.

Future Trajectories

As the demands for ultra-low latency and high throughput persist, the evolution of hardware-aided edge computing continues. Innovations in hardware architectures will focus on further streamlining data processing, enhancing parallelization capabilities, and optimizing communication protocols. Additionally, advancements in 5G and beyond-5G networks, coupled with hardware optimizations, will redefine the benchmarks for latency and throughput, unlocking new frontiers for edge-enabled applications.

The optimization of latency and throughput through hardware-accelerated edge computing represents a paradigm shift in mobile environments. By leveraging specialized hardware architectures and proximity-driven

processing, edge computing promises unparalleled responsiveness, efficiency, and throughput—a testament to the transformative potential of hardware innovations in shaping the mobile ecosystem.[6]

Security and Privacy Aspects

In the ever-expanding landscape of mobile environments, where data traverses through diverse interconnected devices, the fortification of security and privacy has become paramount. Hardware-aided edge computing emerges as a linchpin in addressing the intricate challenges associated with safeguarding sensitive data, ensuring secure communication, and upholding user privacy in the era of pervasive connectivity.

Hardware-Enforced Encryption

One of the foundational pillars of security in hardware-aided edge computing is the implementation of robust encryption mechanisms. Specialized hardware components, such as dedicated encryption engines and secure enclaves, enable the encryption and decryption of data at the edge. This hardware-enforced encryption not only safeguards data in transit but also ensures the confidentiality of stored information, mitigating the risks associated with unauthorized access and interception.

Secure Enclaves and Trusted Execution Environments

Hardware-aided security extends to the establishment of secure enclaves and Trusted Execution Environments (TEEs) at the edge. These isolated and protected zones within the hardware ensure the integrity and confidentiality of critical computations. By creating secure pockets for sensitive operations, edge devices equipped with specialized hardware can thwart potentially threats, including unauthorized access, tampering, and data breaches.

Authentication and Access Control

Authentication mechanisms and access control policies are bolstered by hardware-accelerated security features. Biometric authentication sensors, secure key storage, and hardware-backed identity verification enhance the trustworthiness of edge devices. Through hardware-enabled access control, only authorized entities gain entry to sensitive data and functionalities, fortifying the overall security posture of the edge environment.

Protection Against Side-Channel Attacks

Specialized hardware architectures address vulnerabilities associated with side-channel attacks—sophisticated techniques exploiting information leaked during computation. By implementing countermeasures within the hardware, such as constant-time algorithms and secure multi-party computation, the risk of side-channel attacks is mitigated, contributing to a more robust security foundation.[7]

Privacy-Preserving Edge Computing

Privacy considerations are integral to the discourse of hardware-aided edge computing. Techniques such as homomorphic encryption and differential privacy, supported by specialized hardware components, enable computations on encrypted data without compromising individual privacy. These privacy-preserving measures ensure that sensitive information remains confidential, even during processing at the edge.

Future Challenges and Adaptive Security

Looking forward, the evolving threat landscape necessitates adaptive security measures. Hardware-aided edge computing must contend with emerging challenges such as quantum computing threats, AI-driven attacks, and dynamic cyber threats. Future hardware designs will need to incorporate adaptive security mechanisms, leveraging machine learning and behavioral analytics to detect and mitigate evolving security risks in real-time.

Security and privacy aspects within the realm of hardware-aided edge computing represent a delicate balancing act. As hardware innovations fortify the defenses against a myriad of threats, they also lay the groundwork for a privacy-centric paradigm, where data protection is paramount. The continual evolution of hardware-accelerated security measures is poised to redefine the benchmarks for secure and private operations in mobile environments.

Edge Hardware for AI and ML Applications

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) with edge computing heralds a transformative era, empowering edge devices to perform complex AI-driven tasks locally. This fusion of cutting-edge technologies hinges on specialized hardware architectures, revolutionizing the landscape of AI and ML applications in mobile environments.

Hardware Acceleration for AI Inference

AI inference at the edge necessitates efficient execution of complex algorithms on resource-constrained devices. Hardware acceleration, particularly through Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), dedicated Neural Processing Units (NPUs), and Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs), expedites AI inferencing tasks. These hardware accelerators are optimized for matrix operations and parallel computations, enabling edge devices to execute neural network models efficiently.

On-Device AI Training and Model Compression

The evolution of edge hardware extends beyond inference, facilitating on-device AI model training. Specialized hardware architectures equipped with processing capabilities suitable

for training lightweight models enable edge devices to refine and adapt AI models locally. Furthermore, hardware-driven model compression techniques, such as quantization and pruning, reduce the computational complexity of AI models without compromising accuracy, making them deployable at the edge.[8]

Real-Time Decision-Making with Low Latency

The synergy between hardware-aided edge computing and AI/ML applications enables real-time decision-making with minimal latency. Edge devices equipped with dedicated hardware modules can process streaming data, analyze patterns, and generate actionable insights instantaneously. This capability is pivotal for applications like predictive maintenance, autonomous systems, and IoT-driven smart services, where low-latency decision-making is imperative.

Energy-Efficient AI Processing at the Edge

Energy efficiency is a critical consideration in deploying AI and ML applications at the edge. Hardware optimizations, including low-power architectures, efficient memory utilization, and task-specific accelerators, mitigate the energy overhead associated with AI computations. These energy-efficient designs ensure that AI-driven tasks can be executed on battery-powered edge devices without compromising performance.

Future Trajectories

The evolution of edge hardware for AI and ML applications is poised for further advancements. Innovations in neuromorphic computing, leveraging spiking neural networks and brain-inspired architectures, aim to mimic the brain's computational efficiency. Domain-specific hardware designs tailored for edge AI applications, coupled with advancements in federated learning and privacy-preserving AI, will reshape the landscape of edge-driven intelligence.

Edge hardware's transformative role in enabling AI and ML applications in mobile environments underscores a paradigm shift. By empowering edge devices with AI processing capabilities, specialized hardware architectures pave the way for decentralized, real-time AI-driven insights, redefining the boundaries of intelligence at the edge.

Future Directions and Challenges

The trajectory of hardware-aided edge computing in mobile environments is poised for continual evolution, brimming with transformative potential and multifaceted challenges. Anticipating the future landscape necessitates a careful examination of emerging trends, envisioned advancements, and the intricate challenges poised to shape the trajectory of edge hardware.

Advancements in Heterogeneous Architectures

Future hardware designs will gravitate towards more sophisticated heterogeneous architectures tailored for diverse edge computing tasks. This evolution entails the integration of various processing elements—CPUs, GPUs, NPUs, FPGAs, and domain-specific accelerators—optimized for specific workloads. These advancements will unlock new frontiers in performance, efficiency, and adaptability, catering to the diverse demands of edge applications.

Energy-Efficient Edge Designs

Energy efficiency remains a focal point in the evolution of edge hardware. Future advancements will focus on optimizing energy consumption without compromising computational prowess. Low-power designs, novel materials, and innovative cooling techniques will drive energy-efficient edge hardware, ensuring sustainable operation in resource-constrained mobile environments.

Standardization and Interoperability

The proliferation of diverse hardware architectures poses challenges in terms of interoperability and standardization. Future endeavours will revolve around establishing industry standards, protocols, and interfaces to foster interoperability among heterogeneous edge devices. Harmonizing diverse hardware ecosystems will streamline development, deployment, and management of edge solutions.

Adaptive Security Measures

The dynamic threat landscape demands adaptive security measures embedded within edge hardware. Future hardware designs will integrate machine learning-driven security analytics and behavioral analysis to detect and mitigate evolving cyber threats in real-time. Adaptive security mechanisms will fortify edge environments against sophisticated attacks, ensuring resilience and integrity.

Scalability and Edge Orchestration

Scalability is pivotal in accommodating the ever-expanding array of edge devices and applications. Future edge hardware will emphasize scalable architectures and edge orchestration frameworks capable of dynamically allocating resources, managing workloads, and orchestrating heterogeneous edge deployments seamlessly.[9]

Challenges and Emerging Frontiers

Emerging challenges loom on the horizon, including quantum computing threats, AI-driven attacks, and regulatory compliance. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts to fortify edge hardware against novel threats while ensuring compliance with evolving regulatory frameworks.

Navigating these future trajectories entails striking a delicate balance between innovation and resilience. The continual evolution of hardware-aided edge computing will witness remarkable advancements, yet the landscape will remain rife with challenges, demanding concerted efforts and innovative solutions to realize the full potential of edge-enabled mobile environments.[10]

Conclusion

The evolution of hardware-aided edge computing stands as a transformative force, reshaping the contours of mobile environments and paving the way for a new era of efficiency, responsiveness, and security. This comprehensive review has navigated through the intricate interplay between specialized hardware architectures and the paradigmatic shift towards edge computing, unveiling its multifaceted impacts and challenges within the realm of mobile communication.

From the evolutionary trajectory of hardware, transitioning from traditional architectures to specialized processors, GPUs, FPGAs, ASICs, and heterogeneous architectures, to the optimization of latency, throughput, security, and privacy, the significance of hardware innovations in bolstering edge computing capabilities is undeniable.

The review elucidated the pivotal role of hardware advancements in minimizing latency, enhancing throughput, fortifying security measures through encryption, secure enclaves, access control, and addressing privacy concerns within the dynamic landscape of edge computing. Moreover, it detailed the integration of hardware acceleration with AI and ML applications, enabling real-time decision-making, energy-efficient processing, and on-device training at the edge.

Envisioning the future trajectories of edge hardware, the review underscored the anticipated advancements in heterogeneous architectures, energy efficiency, standardization efforts, adaptive security measures, and scalability, while addressing emerging challenges poised by quantum threats, AI-driven attacks, and regulatory compliance.

As the mobile landscape continues its rapid evolution, the amalgamation of specialized hardware and edge computing paradigms promises to revolutionize industries, empower novel applications, and redefine user experiences. The transformative potential of hardware-aided edge computing lies not only in its technological advancements but also in its profound implications for society, ushering in an era of decentralized intelligence, real-time responsiveness, and secure, privacy-centric mobile environments.

In conclusion, the symbiotic relationship between hardware innovations and edge computing unfolds a tapestry of possibilities, illuminating a future where the convergence of computational prowess and proximity-driven processing reshapes the very fabric of mobile communication.

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