

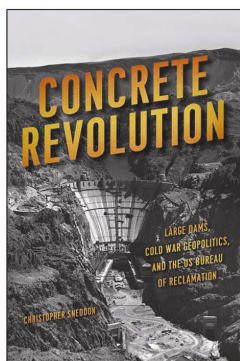
seven chapters covering topics ranging from introduction, concept of prodrugs, types, approaches, applications, role in drug discovery, and future. All chapters clearly enunciate the concepts with appropriate examples. A detailed description of the accepted groups is also included in the book.

This book will be of interest for those exploring different groups to increase the efficacy and bioavailability of the identified molecules, and also experts in the field for formulating the identified molecules.

The book comprises mere 71 pages, which is less for a topic of this importance. It is suggested that the authors include more details about the concept and examples in the next edition to make it a ready reckoner for medicinal chemists/drug discovery scientists. At present, the book can be recommended to colleges where medicinal chemistry is taught as a course and for scientists who wish to understand the definitions of each class of prodrugs.

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**Concrete Revolution: Large Dams, Cold War Geopolitics, and the US Bureau of Reclamation.** Christopher Sneddon. University of Chicago Press, 1427 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA. 344 pp. Price: US\$ 45.00.

Need it be said that big dams epitomize development all over the world. Else, the Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru would not have called these gigantic structures ‘temple of modern India’ and the Ethio-

pian Emperor Haile Selassie would not have hailed big dams as ‘treasure trove of wealth’. Over 50,000 big dams have been built worldwide ever since the Hoover dam had obstructed free-flowing Colorado river into an energy powerhouse. In recent years, however, large dams have come under scrutiny because of social disruptions, cultural dislocation and ecological value. Much of these concerns were captured by the World Commission on Dams in 2000.

Yet, these engineering monoliths continue to obsess several countries including India and China, who persist with dam building despite these being the cause for lingering water-sharing disputes between riparian states and countries. While a great deal is known about the socioecological costs of modern dams, the political dimensions of dam building have remained largely obscure. Water may seem innocuous, but dams have transformed it into a contested resource through acquisition, diversion and control. And, it has seemingly been done on a purpose. Geographer Christopher Sneddon traces the twentieth-century history of dam building to conclude that ‘dams have been exceptionally thick with politics’.

*Concrete Revolution* offers a comprehensive analysis on the motive behind proliferation of dam building in pursuant of US President Truman’s Four Point program of international development. Technical assistance for dam building was a primary disguise for staving off the presumed global expansion of communism, alongside enhancing the capacity of American business interests to increase their global influence and investment opportunities as a bargain. The global economic crises being experienced in the US at that time were critical factors in promoting the role of the federal government in massive public works schemes in as many as 100 countries, which otherwise may not have been feasible.

Presenting snapshots of the US Bureau of Reclamation’s early forays into big dam development across several countries, Sneddon makes a compelling argument in favour of dams as political objects rather than instruments of impartial science. It suited the developing world no less, as dam-driven water resource development travelled geographically without offending radically different ideological and cultural contexts. Notable is the manner in which the

concrete revolution integrated political ecology of construction technologies with techno-political networks.

It is hard not to concur with Sneddon, whose incisive analysis provides fresh insights into understanding the assemblage of networks that maintain and produce large dams. So effective are these networks in promoting large dams that techno-political proponents of hydro-power development perceive ecological disruptions as an unfortunate trade-off against the ‘greater good’ of economic development. No wonder, therefore, that the impact of dams on humans and ecosystems is largely ignored by the decision-making processes.

Sneddon takes a step further to suggest that the assemblages of networks that produce and maintain large dams are not only undemocratic but rarely allow any discussions on alternatives to dams. Loaded as this assertion might be, the fact that the governments have overlooked social and ecological disruptions caused by dam building clearly justifies it. Even the Bureau of Reclamation had sensed this dichotomy. Backed by information on less than desirable impacts of large dams, the Bureau’s Assistant Commissioner Gilbert Stamm had proclaimed ‘We haven’t learned how to apply our vast technical advances to meet the basic values and desires of people.’ This statement was made in 1969 by which time the Bureau’s interest in dam building had started waning, but elsewhere in the world interest on dam building persists.

*Concrete Revolution* offers an authoritative enquiry on large dams, and presents analytical insights into the processes and actors involved in nurturing the techno-political networks. But the book leaves the discerning reader to dig deeper to understand the local and national political ecologies and political economies that continue to stick to dam building as a panacea to fill the developmental void. Part of the problem is that the developing country governments have yet to imagine a ‘world without dams’, whereas river restoration and dam removal have started to gain prominence in the developed world.

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