Why analyse the use of Theories of Change?

Increasingly a dominant tool and discourse, but what are its actual effects? Can lead to...

- Better strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Generating (or aligning with) adaptive development

BUT...

How can it escape the more damaging effects of the results and evidence agenda?
my theory of change involves punching in the face anyone who uses the phrase “theory of change”

and I’ve just moved from theory to practice
What did TAF’s approach look like?

- Learning through doing – not much guidance out there
- Linked programmes to higher level processes of social change
- Killing 3 birds with one stone: used to communicate, learn and be held accountable
A Theory of Change approach is “a way of getting to some agreement on strategies...we can see it’s useful for a tool of communication and collaboration”

“How are Theories of Change actually developed? Is there enough consultation with the people who are supposed to benefit? If there is proper involvement, not token involvement, then these problems [of misleading Theories of Change] wouldn’t come up.”
“I maybe have three versions [of Theories of Change] in the same day, literally; we are trying to constantly clarify and challenge ourselves to say ‘is that what we understand is going on?’”

“...as far as the donors are concerned, they use it to see if it [the programme] is justifiable...and as far as I know there is no particular tool to go back and look at whether it is right or not.”
“If you are candid with them [donors] and tell them what you know and don’t and make them part of the process, it’s much more engaging for them”

“...if you take the donor out then it’s a much more solid kind of process, then you don't need to be putting round pegs in square holes”
A Theory of Change approach can be helpful, but also may be an illusory learning process.

Importance of organizational culture and individual personalities – along with type of project or programme.

Results and evidence: a “corporate stick to beat people with”?

Thank you!