CASE STUDY 32

Codes of ethics: the Hopi Protocol for research, publications and recordings in the USA

The Hopi of Arizona, in the USA, have had extensive experience with the unauthorized and illegitimate use of their cultural heritage. Ceremonial dances have been tape-recorded and the tapes sold to outsiders; designs from skilled Hopi potters have been replicated by non-Hopis; and their kachina dolls – brightly painted wooden dolls with spiritual powers – have been copied and used in inappropriate settings.

To prevent this, the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office has developed a ‘Protocol for Research, Publications and Recordings’, setting out how the Hopi people would like their intellectual resources and traditional cultural expressions to be used by others.

Among other things, the Protocol states that ‘informed consent’ is required for any project or activity involving Hopi intellectual resources; the use of recording devices is restricted; and informants and subjects of a project or activity should “received a fair compensation”, which could include ‘acknowledgement as author, co-author or contributor, royalties, copyright, patent, trademark, or other forms of compensation’.

Apart from the Protocol, the Hopi have initiated projects concerning the preservation and digitization of their cultural heritage in order to prevent the dissemination of knowledge and information without their prior informed consent. The Hopi Oral History Project, for example, aims to record the history and cultural traditions of the Hopi.

For further information:

https://www8.nau.edu/hcpo-p/ResProto.pdf