Do we need a SWOT* for Museums and Can museums help to avoid cultural dementia of our society?

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* SWOT-Analysis: Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
Questions repeatedly raised by politicians

How many museums do we need?

In Germany
- 1980: 3.200
  2008: 6.200 => 1 museum for 13.200 inhabitants
  Are these too many museums? Do we still need museums?
  Are museums too expensive?
- 2009 – 2020 ca. 20 % of these museums are in danger to be closed for financial reasons (e.g. Museum of Natural Sciences in Leipzig, the Art Museum in Bochum, and the City Museum in Hildesheim)

Explanations of museums professionals

What is the role of museums in the society?
- “A museum is a place, which makes own and foreign fictions visible.” (Michael Kröger) [http://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/discussion/2008/Kroeger/](http://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/discussion/2008/Kroeger/)
- “A museum is part of the collective memory and the exhibited objects are part of a collective biography.” (Jean-Christophe Ammann) [http://www.k-faktor.com/frankfurt/thesen.htm](http://www.k-faktor.com/frankfurt/thesen.htm)

Museums are an integral part of our society and cultural life. They assist in building identity, raising awareness and understanding, as well as creativity.

However, this role is more and more questioned by politics, other competing cultural institutions, as well as an audience with fast changing expectations.
Challenges and Threat for Museum
Examples

- Lack of funding
- Lack of expertise
- Fast changing expectations
- Heteronomy by:
  - politics
  - external administrations
  - trustees, non-executive directors
  - donors / sponsors
  - foundations

Examples

- problems to care for the needs of the collection
- problems to preserve the collection
- problems to keep the collection and avoid deaccessioning
- problems to care for the needs of the visitors
- challenges to compete with other cultural and educational institutions
  and therefore
- to fulfill the guidelines of ICOM’s Code of Ethics
Actual example: Consideration of selling Egyptian art by the Northampton Museum

Statue of Sekhem-Ka on sale for 2 Mill. GBP
Northampton Borough Council

ePetition to prevent the sale by the Friends of the Museum:

We the undersigned petition the council to reconsider the proposed sale of Sekhemka in view of the comments below:
It is believed that the proposed sale will have a profound detrimental effect on Northampton Museums, is against the intentions of the original donors, will possibly cause the Museums to lose both accredited and designated status and this lose access to significant public funding.
Opportunities to enhance the profile of museums in the society (Considerations of museum professionals)

Examples
To strengthen the Museum profile as:
- advisor, mentor, educator
- open minded discussion partner
- inspirator and animator
- innovative project partner
- experimental platform
- place of participation

Expectations as result of profile changes
- raising attraction for different audiences
- raising acceptance of the educational value
- raising attraction for co-operations
- raising attraction for donors and supporters and hopefully
- raising willingness for financial support