op-shop sketch

the idea

- a worker-owned physical store for second hand clothes & accessories, run as a syndicate of OPCO
- pay-what-you-can pricing, including paying with clothing (permanent clothes swap)
- sectioned by item type, not gender
- additionally retailing locally produced new clothing (looping it into the gift economy)
- paying ourselves enough money to meet our basic financial needs
- high standards for clothing donations to minimize waste and maximize quality

why

beauty in the waste of fashion power

Fashion as a product is deeply linked to two major forces of power: capitalism, which dominates its production through the use of slave labor and environmental destruction, and gender, which determines how we use clothing to relate with our bodies and with other people. There's lot potential to creates spaces for fashion outside of these power structures, finding beauty in their waste. Unfortunately, second hand clothing shops often reproduce them; they'll mark up items using labels like "boutique" or "vintage", direct profits towards their associated religious organization or means-tested charity, and divide clothing into gendered categories. The op-shop will do none of these.

remuneration

We'll keep the core group of workers small, allowing us to meet our basic financial needs, while still welcoming the cooperation of people with other means to support themselves. This is not an act of gatekeeping, but the start of a dream: a future filled with many varied cooperative projects, each fulfilling a specific role and capable of supporting it's workers.

minimal waste

Having high standards for what items we take in requires some extra work, but it stops us having to throw "away" lots of stuff (many second hand stores bin up to two thirds of donations). If we receive items made of quality material that we don't want to sell for some reason, or that don't sell after some time, we can give them to local clothing makers to reduce material costs for their work.

how we do it

- get keen cooperators together to flesh out the details a bit more
- discuss our needs, means & abilities to collectively decide how we can support ourselves
- crowdfunding over the summer (+ finding initial donations)
- find a space and get cracking!

considerations for the coop

Because this will be OPCO's first project that's entirely separate from Yours, the coop will have to lean more heavily onto syndication. GAs are functionally Yours meetings at the moment, but having another project ongoing will push us to separate syndicate matters into their own meetings, keeping GAs for coop-wide things.

This doesn't mean GAs will become unimportant admin-fests. In fact, I think they'll become even more important, since we'll have to facilitate collaborations, resource sharing, and responsibilities between syndicates. What, for example, is the op-shop cooperator's relationship with Yours, or vice versa? Surely a great one, but maybe different from your relationship with the project you're most directly connected to.

Laying this groundwork for a larger, more varied coop is the start of something exciting, and it's going to be fun.