



## **PART A. PROFILE OF BUSINESS**

“*ALAB Associazione Liberi Artigiani-Artisti Balarm*” is a non-profit association including more than fifty laboratories and 250 partners. This association represents an important engine that leads to the development of creative and innovative craftsmanship with the purpose to create recognizable quality brands.

*ALAB* was created in Palermo in 2010, from an idea of actual president of the association, Pietro Muratore, who, over the years, met lot of artisans, architects, artists, photographers and inventors that were thinking about leaving their hometown and look for an occupation abroad. These artisans were mainly people that benefitted low income and didn't have enough resources to subscribe to the Chamber of Commerce and register for VAT. For this reason, Pietro studied the legislation and found the solution in the same definition of *creative artisan*.

We can define as creative artisan who creates some goods of which at least 70% of the production comes from their own and sole work; the creation must be unique, and it is excluded any form of mass-production.

The association is now a network that links artists, students and enthusiasts that want to deepen their knowledge about craftsmanship; so, they all created a platform where to share cultural initiatives, contributing to the defense and diffusion of craftsmanship and art in general. The main purpose of the project is to promote and sustain new businesses with the profits coming from the laboratories; this method revealed to be a success since different artisans were able to register to VAT and draw the attention of investors, even foreign ones.

These goods sold by ALAB are unique, designed and created following the inventiveness of its creator, that use characteristic raw material.

The association carries out a cultural and social action through events, workshops, stages, exhibits, public initiatives and themed markets, with the purpose of handing down the passion for these old jobs to the youths and show that there is a real employment that involves manual skills, creativity and knowledge.

## **PART B. THE FAMILY DIMENSION OF BUSINESS**

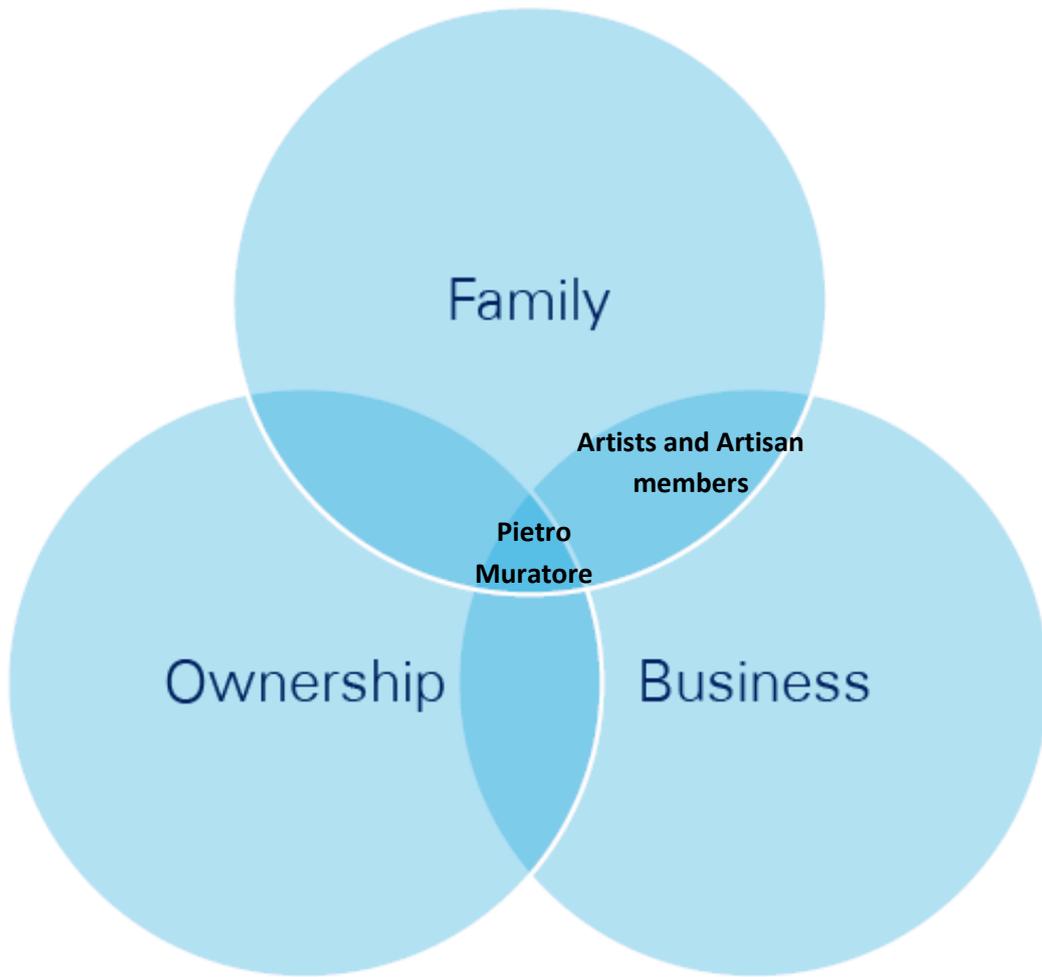
The Association can be considered as a big family, with Pietro Muratore as the founder and president. He is in charge for all the main issues of the association that enclose legal, bureaucratic, economic, financial and tax-related aspects. Every member is instead in charge for personal costs management and has to convey 5% of the revenues to the association shares, to the European subsidies, to the returns that some initiatives promoted by the association generate, to the earnings that derive from promotional initiatives and services. In this way, the amounts converge to a unique bank account held by the president, that has the duty to manage them, finance the agreed activities, and pay all the insurances that the members own.

The members are like relatives that joined a big family business. Before joining ALAB and opening a laboratory, there is a formative procedure to follow: every new member should support an already existing laboratory, then, a direct experience with the future partners in the markets will follow and lastly, the laboratory can be opened.

The ALAB Statute bases itself on three distinct principles that every member must follow: *fairness*, *effort* and *awareness*.

The *fairness principle* can be either *external*, where the member must clearly declare the methodology, the materials and the criteria adopted during the production; and *internal*, where the members must not compete against each other. The association is willing to fight the potential rivalry that could emerge among the members, and that can be possible thanks to the frequent collaboration between two or more laboratories; for example, some projects are run by the synergic work of ceramists and woodworkers. The *effort principle* concerns the active development of each member with the purpose of being part of society based on quality fundamentals. The *awareness principle* is instead the driving force that drives the members to operate in an innovative and dynamic way. Following these three principles, all artisan and artists share the value of freedom as personal creativity skill, but at the same time they convey to a fundamental collective spirit.

Moreover, the “*new generation*”, consisting in young members that chose to join ALAB, had the chance to give a touch of modernity, by creating a more intuitive website, managing the Facebook pages and design new initiatives.



**Figure 1 –ALAB Circle diagram**

## **PART C. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF BUSINESS GROWTH & SUCCESSION**

The big challenge that ALAB had to face was to offer an opportunity to who did not believe that their own manual and creative skills could have been an income source. The cornerstone that characterize the birth if the association are the active participation of all the members, and their awareness about the characteristics of artistic works that allows craftsmanship to be distinguished from the industrial production.

Thanks to ALAB, several shutters that were closed for even more than thirty years, are now open. It was possible to restore vitality to lot of little streets of Palermo that were once abandoned. The real value of artistic craftsmanship is rediscovered, not only as heritage but also an economic source where to benefit from.

This network of laboratories near the old town of Palermo led to the birth of an ecosystems that fosters itself. The area is now a renewed attractive point for tourists and several bar and restaurants had the chance to recover or take advantages from it.

The association now considers how to benefit from the increasing touristic flow that the members casually experienced; for example, by offering specialized packages that contains offering that were not thought before.

ALAB is now a brand that recalls quality and security; property owners are often inclined to lend their spaces to ALAB artisans due to the high trust they put on them.

The association has also an educational function. It wants to promote this ancient art to internal and external people through events and workshops. The main purpose is to hand down to the youth these old jobs and to demonstrate that Palermo can offer them new employment opportunities, without looking for a job abroad.

Even though ALAB faced many difficulties and did not benefit from any public subsidy, the association managed



to move outside Palermo and create artisan activities in the other Sicilian cities like Castellammare, Alcamo, San Cipirello, Villabate, Canicattì e Castelbuono.

To this day, ALAB now counts fifty laboratories and more than 250 active members, and next year other eight activities will be opened.

Moreover, during the seven years of activities, the association stipulated some agreements with the Local Authorities like Regions, Municipalities and Provinces, with the purpose to spread the social and cultural activities like meeting, seminars, workshops and formation and refresher courses.

## PART D. THE ENTREPRENEURIAL DIMENSION

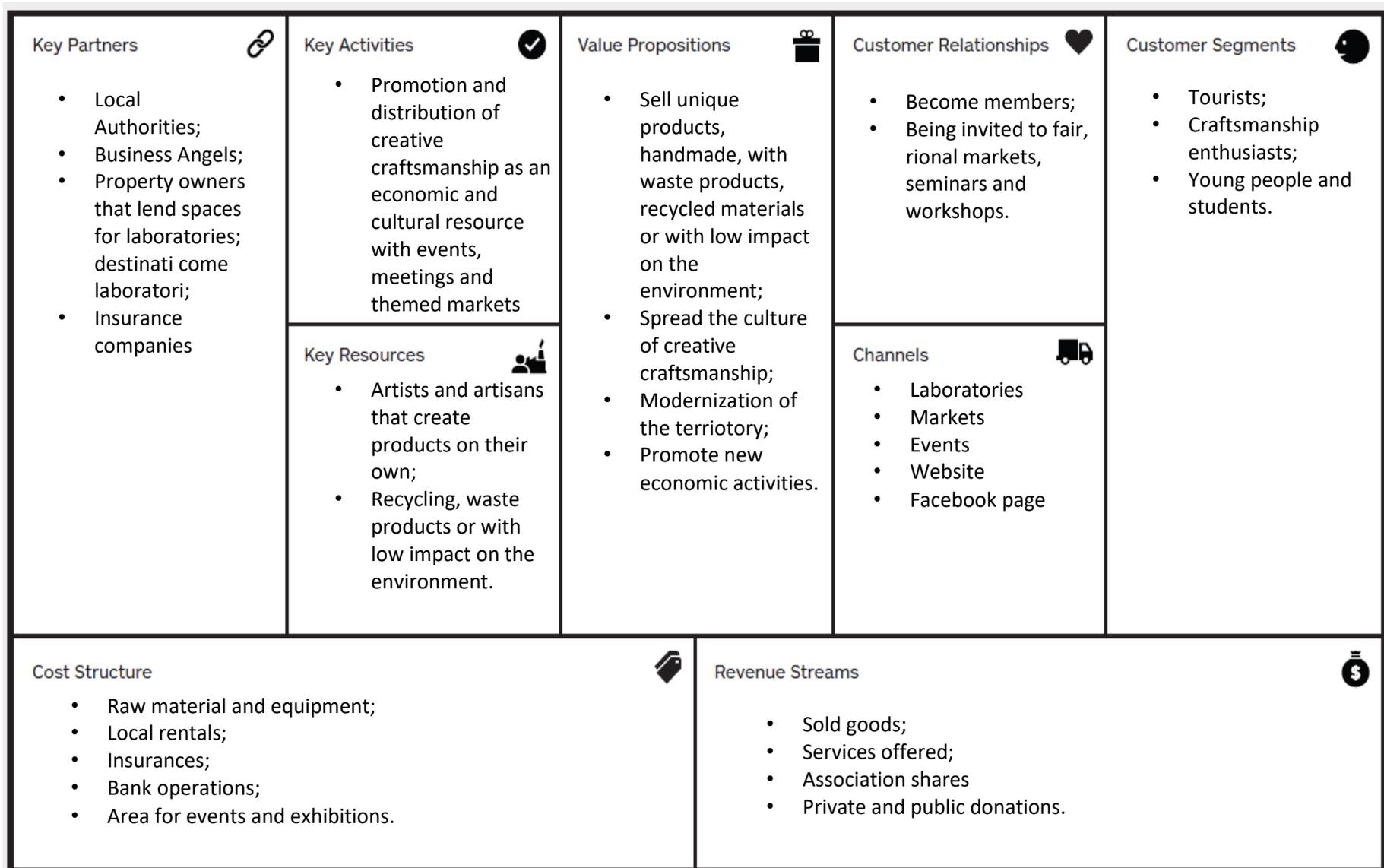
As mentioned before, today ALAB counts fifty laboratories and more than 250 active members, that mainly operate in the old town of Palermo, the remaining part work instead in the near provinces.

The main activity are:

- The creation a diffuse network of both artisans and artists for the urban modernization of the territory: ALAB succeeded to bring back to life a neighborhood, in the old town of Palermo, that was once abandoned and forgotten from many.



- The creation of a unique product, not standardized or industrial, that can be linked to the concepts of quality, environmental care and security that the ALAB wants to show with its brand. This cornerstone is to “give new vitality to the owned products” and this can be reflected with the respect for the environment that can be seen with a production that uses mostly waste products, recycled goods and low environmental impact materials (e.g. vegetable-tanned leather, or without chemical additives).
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- The diffusion of the creative craftsmanship can be considered as an economic and cultural innovation: the association offers workshops, free courses and events with the attempt to teach and train both young people and whoever wants to make profit from their own creation.



**Figure 2 – ALAB business model canvas**

## **PART E. FAMILY ENTREPRENEURIALISM: LESSONS & CONCLUSION**

*“Fai della tua passione, la tua professione”* (transl. Make your passion become your profession) is the ALAB mission: the artist and artisans’ association that allowed youths, freelancers and unemployed people to reinvent themselves and become creative artisans. This result was possible thanks to the creation of a “family” of artists and artisans, that gave them the opportunity to gain and develop from their manual skills and creativity.

The advantages that every member benefits are:

- Belonging to a network of acquaintances that allows them to identify themselves the ALAB brand as a symbol of quality and security;
- Selling unique products, made with their own effort and skills and with very low impact on the environment;
- The possibility to run a new economic activity;
- Bequeath the culture and the experience to the young people who are interested to learn from this ancient art.