

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Migration in the Indonesian context is often referred to as "*merantau*". This term has long been known in the Malay tradition to describe the displacement of people in search of freedom. The meaning of migration differs according to ethnicity, such as *minggat* in Java or *malkke daporeng* in Bugis, migrating is seen as a cultural tradition that is inherited between generations (Fathi, 2024). Migration can be defined as the movement of people from one area to another. People who migrate are called migrants/migrants. According to Astuti (2023), migration is carried out by individuals voluntarily by considering the losses and benefits that may be obtained, and based on the desire to improve aspects of life to get out of poverty while improving the economic welfare of individuals. Most migrants are in the early productive age, specifically aged 20-39 years, with the highest rate in the 20-29 age group (26.3 percent), generally driven by motivation to earn better life opportunities (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024).

The pattern of migration distribution indicates the direction and purpose of population movement. Generally, migration is divided into international and internal. International migration refers to the movement of the people between countries, while internal migration refers to movement between region within a single country, whether between island, provinces, or districts/cities (Achsin & Rosalinda, 2021). Internal migration also includes patterns of movement from village to village, city to city, city to village and village to city. The pattern of internal regional distribution in Indonesia is dominated from villages to large cities, but only 20% follow this pattern (Pitoyo et al., 2025). This is natural because cities are often perceived as a place to improve living standards, with more complete supporting facilities so that they are more chosen than other regions (Saputra, 2021) This shows that migration requires an adaptive strategy that is influenced by socio-economic and institutional factors. In addition, migration is also influenced by gender factors where men more often migrate in stages for the economy, while women migrate more in one stage due to marriage. Meanwhile, higher education also magnifies the opportunities of individuals to engage in migration (Pitoyo et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of migration brings challenges because it requires individuals to leave their home environment and enter uncertain conditions, thereby sparking an emotional drive to seek the meaning of "home". In this context, home is no longer limited to a specific place or time, but rather as a hybrid concept that includes the experience of individuals who continue to be in the process of searching for a space to call home without completely relinquishing their

connection to their hometown and being influenced by the dynamics of cultural identity and social norms. Therefore, home can be interpreted as feelings and emotional ties with identity (Samavaki, 2023). This interpretation aligns with the concept of homecoming proposed by Bryant (2023), which views homecoming not just as adjusting to new conditions, but as the process of living life completely and daring to put oneself in place. In the overseas context, homecoming contains emotional and cultural values that continue to be present in the memory, where the identity, nostalgia, and value of their hometown remain attached even though they face the challenges of live abroad (Sugiarto, 2025).

This causes psychological stress due to separation from family, with homesickness becoming a common issue among Indonesian migrants. However, it should be underlined, nostalgia and homesickness are two similar concepts and often appear together. Nostalgia describes longing for the past while homesickness refers to negative emotions due to longing for a place that is considered home (Garro, 2024). A sense of belonging and attachment to a place are emotionally important aspects that connect humans to space (place attachment). Groups that have an attachment to places tend to have low mobility, close contact with local communities such as family, friends, and neighbors. In addition, they have higher confidence, a higher perception of meaning and life satisfaction (Cardend, 2022). Therefore, the meaning of hometown depends on the way a person views or feels his place of origin where this perception can vary depending on the individual's personal experience, background, and emotional relationship to his place of origin, as well as his social environment (Sugiarto, 2025). According to Relph (1976), the house is the basis of individual identity, not just a residential building that can be replaced or moved, but an irreplaceable center of meaning.

Survival and life journey are intertwined to form the meaning of homecoming in migrants, where the process of survival during the migration life journey changes the perception of home. Survival in the context of migration is the ability of individuals to adapt to a new environment and face situations that are considered dangerous by involving the management of psychological fear and stress (López-de-León et al., 2025). The survival process then becomes part of the life journey which can be defined as the overall narrative of an individual's life journey. Based on research conducted by Allsopp (2024), life journeys in young migrants are expressed through narrative genres that show how their life processes and experiences, in which migration is not only a physical displacement but also an emotional transformation. Survival during the migration life journey will then shape the understanding of homecoming as healing, where the return home will reconstruct the memory of the migrant who experienced isolation

within himself due to a shift in identity trapped between two cultures and places that do not feel familiar (Joseph & Borah, 2025). Overall, these three aspects are interrelated, where survival is part of the life journey which will later redefine homecoming as a meaningful end to the journey of an overseas life.

In the context of visual communication design, visual media has the power to convey abstract concepts into something that is easy to understand and feel by the audience. Visual Multimedia Communication specifically emphasizes mastery of interactive digital media, including animation, video, and other time-based media. Multimedia is a combination of various elements such as text, images, sounds, animations, and videos that are integrated and support each other to convey information effectively (Mamis et al., 2023). However, often personal and universal themes such as homecoming, survival and life journey are rarely explored. Previous visual communication design studies have explored visual storytelling with animation media where most of the narrative focus is only human-centered with educational and social purposes. On the other hand, visual content that raises environmental and animal themes is only rigid documentary or educational, rarely utilizing 2D animation that uses non-human characters as metaphors. This gap shows the need for a new approach that bridges this through the medium of animation.

Animation media is now not only enjoyed by children, but also able to attract the attention of teenagers to adults. The differences between children's and adult animation include the target audience, content, theme, visual style, narrative complexity, and tone of the work. Adult animation is able to explore complex themes such as social issue, political satire, and adult humor, with nuanced storytelling and more diverse visual styles that are in line with the genre. The narrative is more complex, intellectually layered with deep characters, nonlinear plots, and sophisticated story structures. However, some works are actually able to bridge the two by attracting a wide audience through elements that can be enjoyed by both children and adults (Ramadana et al., 2023). In addition, modern animation not only presents entertainment and visual beauty, but also reflects important issues in the community environment and is effective in conveying the message of socio-cultural dynamics (Elizabeth et al., 2025). Even so, narrative representations of migration through 2D animation media are still rarely explored. Previous research has focused more on statistical data and textual narratives while visualizations such as animations have rarely been explored for social themes such as homecoming. This shortcoming makes this research important, as 2D animation has proven effective in storytelling social themes, and promotes understanding and empathy through engaging visuals.

This design offers novelty by proposing 2D animation with an anthropomorphic approach, i.e. transforming animal characteristics as a metaphor for human identity (Song & Gabija, 2025). In this design, the sea turtle migration is used as a metaphor to represent the journey of human life. Metaphor functions as a tool to understand a concept through its relation to other concepts, depending on the perspective and process of individual understanding. The imaginative and creative nature of metaphors allows the prominence of certain aspects while concealing other aspects thereby providing a new understanding of human experiences, activities, knowledge and beliefs (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This distinguishes this study from previous work that may have focused only on one aspect such as, animation about sea turtles alone or animation about the human life journey. This study brings the two together so as to produce an emotional and informative hybrid narrative by combining the biological facts of turtles and the human psychological depth of the homecoming phenomenon in migrants. Sea turtles were chosen because their migration cycle is similar to that of migrants struggles. Sea turtle hatchlings will leave the coast where they hatch, migrate to the open seas for many years, and then return to the same beach to lay eggs (natal homing) which provides a greater chance of reproduction, although it seems irrational because turtles pass through places that are actually suitable for breeding, but still migrate far away to lay eggs in their place of origin (Lohmann et al., 2008).

Cartoons of animals that speak and behave like humans can be referred to as anthropomorphic forms. Based on a comparative analysis conducted by (Song & Gabija, 2025) on the films *Kung Fu Panda* (2008), *Zootopia* (2016), and *Sing 2* (2021), it shows that anthropomorphism has proven to be effective as a narrative strategy to build emotional engagement and convey complex themes such as identity discovery, social conflict, and creative ambition through the incorporation of human characteristics with the characteristics of a particular species without eliminating traits animals, but are contextualized as a source of strength, as the character Po in *Kungfu panda* is able to bring humor as well as emotional depth to audiences of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Thus, such anthropomorphic approaches can be explored through the medium of 2D animation, which allows the development of simple cartoon-style characters, unique unrealistic shapes and flexible yet visually appealing movements (Du, 2021). This visual and technical freedom provides space for animators to experiment with different techniques, materials and storytelling ways to express ideas, evoke emotions and deepen audience engagement (Karmakar, 2021).

The urgency of this design lies in the need for reflective entertainment media that encourages ordinary audiences, especially early adults, to reflect on the meaning of struggle, survival strategies and the meaning of the concept of home. Through the use of the metaphor of turtle migration as the main character, this animation wants to present a narrative experience that is not patronizing, but opens up space for emotional reflection for the audience. This research is expected to make an academic contribution through the approach of visual design combined with the study of migration anthropology and psychology, so as to present a unique narrative visual model with the theme of homecoming. Thus, this design not only serves as a medium of entertainment, but also as a reflective medium that builds a new understanding of migration as a meaningful process of life journey.

1.2. Problem Identification

The following problem identification is a summary of the main problems discussed in the background, which includes aspects of population migration, changes in the meaning of homecoming, and gaps in visual representation through 2D animation, where each point is supported by the latest research data that strengthens the analysis as follows:

- a. The survival process is an important part of the migrants life journey which forms a new meaning of homecoming, where the process of surviving in a new place that causes loss of attachment to the home of origin and psychological stress, during the migratory life journey changes the perception of home as healing (Joseph & Borah, 2025). As explained by (Relph, 1976), the house is not a physical building that can be replaced but the center of the meaning of an irreplaceable identity, In addition, life journey is often expressed in the narrative genre (Allsopp, 2024) which is in line with the concept of 2D storytelling animation in this design to represent survival, life journey and meaning Homecoming for migrants.
- b. Previous research has focused more on human narratives or documentaries about animals or the environment, while 2D animation is rarely used as a metaphor for social themes such as homecoming. Research shows anthropomorphism has proven to be effective as a narrative strategy to build emotional engagement as well as convey complex themes such as identity discovery, social conflict and creative ambition through the incorporation of human characteristics with the characteristics of certain species (Song & Gabija, 2025). However, representations of migration narratives through animation are still minimal, especially those that use animals as metaphors.

- c. The lack of 2D animation exploration that incorporates the biological facts of sea turtle migration (such as natal homing) as a representation of human struggles, even though Sea turtles exhibit homing behaviors similar to migrants' life journeys. Recent studies show that sea turtles perform high-precision natal homing which is influenced by magnetic fields and environmental conditions (Lohmann et al., 2008).

1.3. Problem Statement

Based on the problem identification that has been described, the problem formulation of this design is "How to design an emotional 2D animation that represents the homecoming for migrant through the metaphor approach of the sea turtle migration?"

1.4. Scope and Limitations

To clarify the scope of the research and the design outcomes, the problem statement is defined as follows:

- a. The research focuses on the context of internal migration in Indonesia, specifically migrants in early adulthood (ages 20-40), without addressing international migration or other age groups.
- b. Visual representation is limited to 2D storytelling animations using standard software such as Toon squid, and similar tools, without involving 3D animation, live-action footage, or other interactive media.
- c. The migration metaphor is focused on sea turtle, based on their natal homing behavior. Without comparing them to other migratory animals, such as birds or salmon.
- d. The design output consists of a short animation lasting a maximum of 5 minutes intended for general audience, particularly young adults.
- e. The research does not cover the environmental conservation of sea turtle in depth, but rather uses them only as metaphorical element, with biological data on sea turtle serving as secondary sources.
- f. The theoretical scope is limited to the fields of multimedia visual communication, migration anthropology, and homecoming psychology, without exploring other theories such as the economic and politics of migration.

1.5. Design Objectives

The purpose of this design is to create a 2D storytelling animation that represents the concept of homecoming through a metaphorical approach of sea turtle migration for early adult migrants (20-40 years) in Indonesia. Specifically, the purpose of this design includes:

- a. Providing reflective entertainment media that elevates the experience of traveling, the search for identity and the meaning of home as part of the homecoming process for an early adult audience (20-40 years old).
- b. Develop a visual narrative of combining the biological facts of sea turtle migration (natal homing) and human emotional experiences to represent homecoming.
- c. Optimizing visual communication through an anthropomorphism approach to turtle characters to build empathy and audience understanding of migration issues and emotional attachment to home.

1.6. Design Benefits

This design makes a significant contribution to the understanding of science, technology, and art, as follows:

a. Academic and scientific contribution

This design adds to the study in Visual Communication Design, especially 2D animation, by showing the use of visual metaphors and anthropomorphism to convey the concept of *homecoming*. This work shows how visual elements such as characters, movements, colors, and storylines can be used as communication strategies to convey emotional experiences effectively.

b. Technology and art contribution

This design contributes to the development of 2D animated artwork through narrative visual exploration aimed at adult audiences. This work demonstrates the potential of animation as a reflective entertainment medium that utilizes animation technology to convey complex themes symbolically and emotionally.

1.7. Conceptual Framework

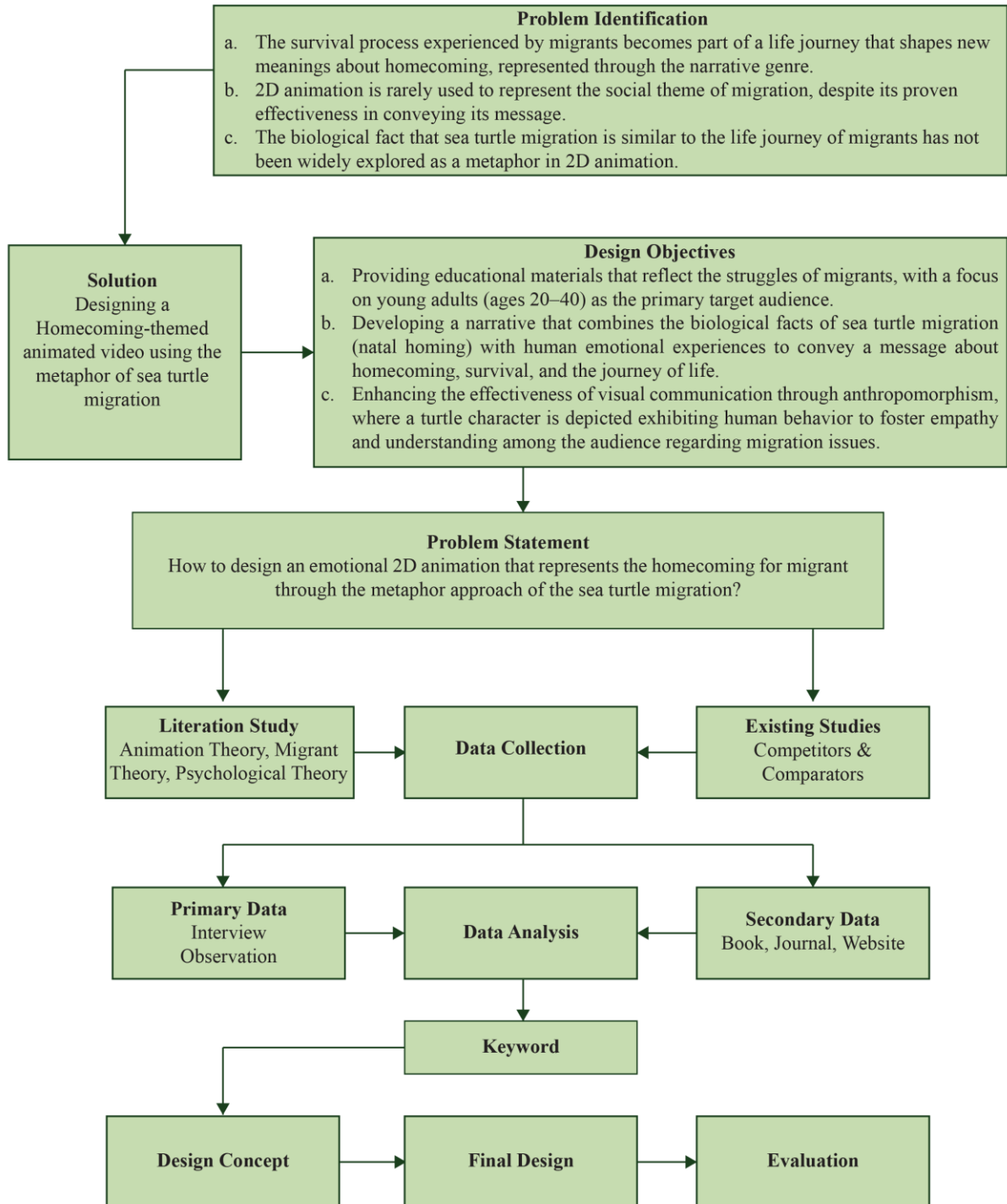


Figure 1.1 Design Framework Diagram
(Source: Personal Documentation)