HIS next title just might be the next big thing in gaming — a massive multi-genre game that lets you determine the evolution of a species from a cell, all the way to its adventures visiting other creatures across the galaxy in spaceships.

Mr Will Wright, creator of “god” games such as SimCity and The Sims, is set to release Spore internationally next month. The 48-year-old is in town this week to talk to businesses on the impact of gaming on brand building at the Global Brand Forum.

But really, is there a place for brands in games?

“Within the palette of media forms, I think games are inherently the most personal of entertainment experiences. By linking a player’s actions, motivations and interests into various brands, games occupy a unique space where brands can be represented and used in a way that feels like a net positive on the player experience rather than a blatant product placement,” the game designer explained.

Mr Wright also believes that games can be used effectively in education. “I think there is a place for games in education but right now, their most valuable contribution comes in the form of motivation,” he told TOXO in an email interview. “Kids are good at learning things on their own if they become sufficiently motivated. Games are a great way to introduce new subjects to kids that they may find dry and boring in a linear format. As a toy or a game, the subject can come alive in the players’ imagination.”

It might come as a surprise to people that he counts the classic Chinese boardgame of Weiqi, more commonly known as Go, as his all-time favourite because of the game’s balance of simplicity in rules and complexity in strategy. Other games he enjoys include Grand Theft Auto, Sid Meier’s Civilization and the Battlefield series.

“I really like games that are open-ended enough for me to do weird and creative new things and in doing so, in my own imagination, build a surreal narrative around my experience,” he said.

Games will become more personal in the future, he predicts. In Spore, the data from player-created creatures is aggregated in an online database and used to populate the planets in the galaxies of other players. Mr Wright expects more games to make use of the player’s creativity to develop the game environment for other players. His next titles will be based on such concepts, he tells TOXO.

“I’m still very intrigued by what you can accomplish by harnessing the collective imagination of millions of players. I’m also interested in how games can get people to understand the world they live in new ways.”

With games becoming more ubiquitous, Mr Wright also sees them migrating from specialised computers or consoles to mobile phones, handheld systems and the Internet. “In the future, I can imagine games that are customised by the computer with the help of player-created content and playable at almost any time with whatever convenient hardware is at hand.”

The Spore program has opened our eyes to many critical issues in game development. But if there is one thing that it has taught us, it is that as game developers, we need to be flexible and learn to adapt our game designs and production methods as problems arise. We have learnt not to be afraid to let go of our original ideas if they prove to be impractical.

At the end of the day, players will only experience the game that you actually make, not the one that you wanted to make. And if the game you made turns out great, players will never know that that was not the game you originally wanted to create.