Rising Skyline - The Tallest Buildings in Europe, 1875–2007

Tall buildings are major feats of engineering, showing off to the world the industriousness, economic might, and technical prowess of the people who built them. As such, competitiveness and a desire for prestige have been major factors driving their construction. Medieval cities competed for the largest and tallest churches to glorify God and themselves. Early in the Cold War, Stalin ordered the construction of some of the tallest buildings Europe had ever seen in order to avoid embarrassment at how Moskva’s skyline compared to that of capitalist cities. More recently, the growing wealth of Turkey and Russia has led to a spate of new highrises which demonstrate their increasing economic clout. Building higher continues to be a way for one group of people—a city, a state, a corporation—to show off to others. This map shows the location of each of the one hundred eighteen buildings that, at some point between 1875 and the end of 2007, were ranked among the thirty tallest in Europe.
Increasing Data Density with Multivariate Symbols

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City Symbols

Each city is represented by a clock, which runs from 1875 to 2008. Tick marks are placed every twenty years.

The area of the clock is in proportion to the number of buildings in this city which, at some point between 1875 and 2007, were among the thirty tallest in Europe. This number is also written inside the clock.

On the rim of the clock are tracks indicating when each building in this city was ranked among the thirty tallest. Each track is color-coded by building type, according to the following scheme:

- City Hall
- Hotel
- Hospital
- Mixed Use
- Religious
- Museum
- Residential
- Office
- University

Example: Madrid has had four buildings which have been among the thirty tallest in Europe at some point between 1875 and 2007. The first was a hotel, which was ranked from 1913 to 1961. The second was a mixed use building, from 1937 to 1980. The third was an office building ranked from 1988 to 1999. The fourth was an office building ranked in 2007 and still among the thirty tallest in Europe as of year's end.