Summary
The word for ‘sugar’ entered the dialects of Limburg in the thirteenth or fourteenth century from the east in the form [sukœr]. Comparison with the dialectal vocalism of other words containing Wgm. *u in a closed syllable, such as ‘he-goat’ (Dutch bok), ‘mouth’ (Dutch mond) and ‘dog’ (Dutch hond), shows that in the southwestern part of Limburg, those words have a different vocalism from that of ‘sugar’, thus implying that *o and *u had already merged when ‘sugar’ was borrowed with [u]. In the northeastern part of Limburg, ‘sugar’ joined the descendants of *u and their later development into a lower vowel.

More recently, a development [sokœr] > [sokœr] took place in Central Dutch Limburg, and this can be compared with the same development in the word for ‘bigger’ (Dutch groter), generally described as shortening of a long vowel followed by a voiceless stop plus syllabic r or l.

The study of the more recent loanword ‘sugar’ thus provides us with internal linguistic evidence to date the merger of *u and *o in the southwestern dialects of Limburg, and so supplements palaeographic studies that were unable to draw sharp lines in this question.